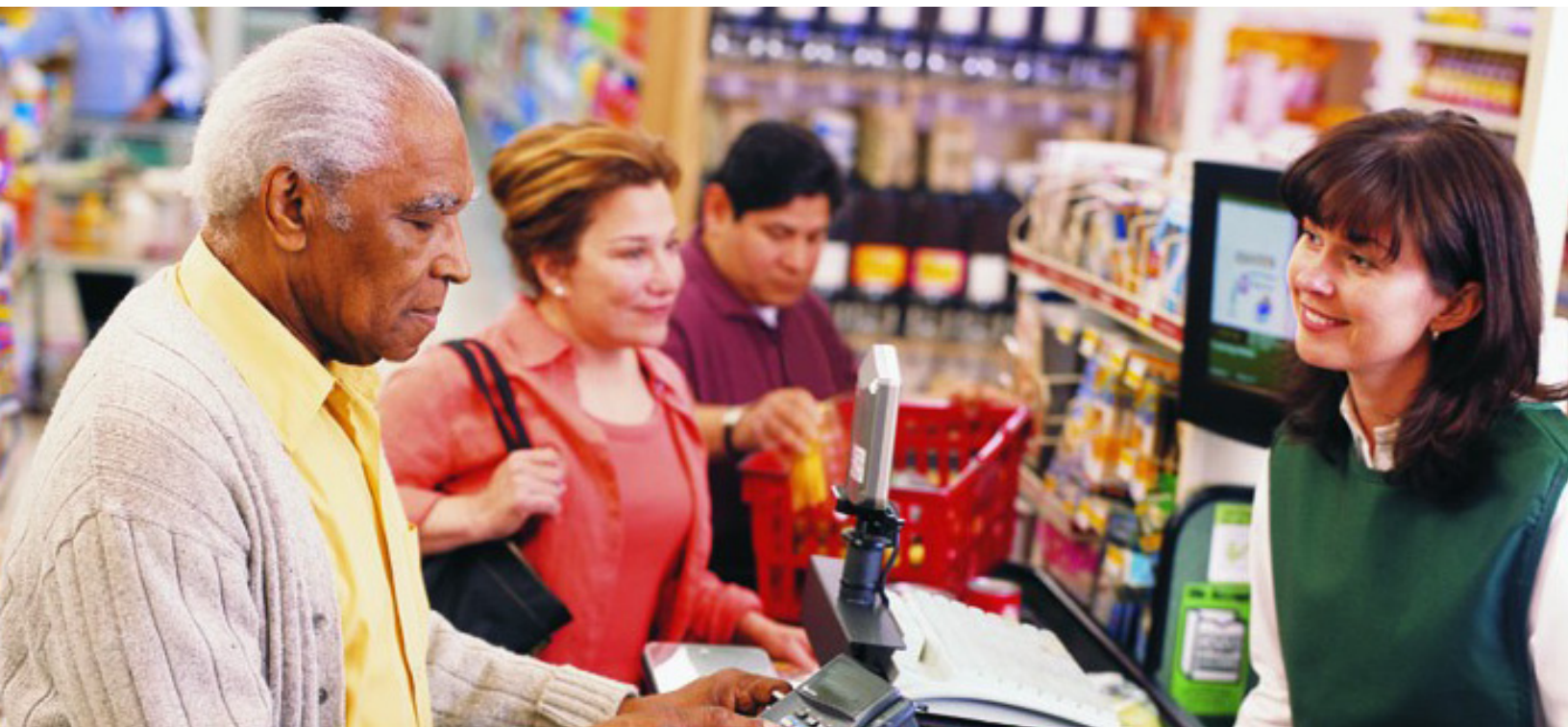




Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) COMMUNITY PARTNER OUTREACH TOOLKIT

PUTTING HEALTHY FOODS
WITHIN REACH



Foreword

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Please refer to www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach.htm The toolkit is also available online at this Web site and will be updated as needed.

COMMUNITY TOOLKIT

U.S. Department of Agriculture
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STATE PARTNER TOOLKIT

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The Basics: What You Need to Know



The Basics

Introduction

Provides an overview of this toolkit and how to use it. Includes statistics, facts and figures about SNAP, key messages and talking points. Also, lays the groundwork for how community and faith-based organizations can work with State and local SNAP offices, as well as other local nonprofits.

SNAP Name Change

In 2008, the Food Stamp Program formally changed its name to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This chapter provides an overview of the reasoning behind the name change, benefits and challenges related to the name change, and branding information.

Introduction

The Benefits of Participation in SNAP

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is an investment in our future. It offers nutrition benefits to participating clients, supports work, and provides economic benefits to communities. However, too many low-income people who are eligible for the program do not participate and thus forgo nutrition assistance that could stretch their food dollars at the grocery store. Their communities lose out on the benefits provided by new SNAP dollars flowing into local economies.

In fiscal year 2008, only 66 percent¹ of those eligible for SNAP benefits participated. The most common reason eligible people do not participate is because they do not realize they may be eligible. Others choose not to apply because of myths or misunderstandings about SNAP benefits or because of stigma that continues to persist. Others make a cost-benefit decision that the time involved in applying for benefits is not worth the expected return. Some do not want to accept government assistance. For specific populations, there may be additional compounding factors, such as language barriers for legal immigrants, or time and transportation barriers for the working poor. Seniors may not understand the nature of the program and choose not to apply for benefits, thinking children or families need the help more.

Outreach and education are powerful tools in overcoming barriers to SNAP participation. Even a small increase in SNAP participation can have a substantial impact. If the national participation rate rose 5 percentage points, 1.9 million more low-income people would have an additional \$1.3 billion in benefits per year to use to purchase healthy food and \$2.5 billion total in new economic activity would be generated nationwide.

“SNAP is the first line of defense against hunger in our community. Making sure low-income people receive SNAP benefits accomplishes many things. First and most importantly, people get fed. Second, community and faith-based organizations such as ours are relieved of having to provide a higher level of food assistance. Third, the local grocers do business with customers that they may not have otherwise. And fourth, we are all healthier and happier.”

Bill Bolling, Executive Director,
Atlanta Community Food Bank Atlanta, Georgia

Why does increasing participation in SNAP make sense for your community?

SNAP Generates Economic Activity

SNAP brings Federal dollars into communities in the form of benefits which are redeemed by SNAP participants at local stores. These benefits ripple throughout the economies of the community, State, and Nation. For example:

- Every \$5 in new SNAP benefits generates a total of \$9.20 in community spending.²
- Every additional dollar's worth of SNAP benefits generates 17 to 47 cents of new spending on food.³
- On average, \$1 billion of retail food demand by SNAP recipients generates 3,300 farm jobs.⁴

1. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Research and Analysis (ORA). Trends in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Rates, 2001-2008, by Joshua Leftin. Washington, DC, June 2010. Available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/menu/Published/snap/SNAPPartNational.htm>.
2. Hanson, Kenneth, and Elise Golan (2002). Effects of Changes in Food Stamp Expenditures Across the U.S. Economy. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. Available at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/fanrr26/fanrr26-6/fanrr26-6.pdf>. Note: The economic effect of increasing food stamp benefits was measured for the whole U.S. economy and may vary by location.
3. Food and Nutrition Assistance Programs and the General Economy: Links to the General Economy and Agriculture (2002). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. Note: Even though recipients spend all food stamps on food, the food stamps allow them to shift some of their previous cash expenditures on food to alternative uses.
4. Ibid.

In fiscal year 2009, the average monthly SNAP benefit per household was approximately \$272.⁵ These benefits, funded by Federal dollars, create business when they are redeemed at your local food retailers. Eighty-six percent of benefits, totaling \$25 billion, were redeemed at the nation's 35,000 supermarkets. The remaining benefits, totaling \$3.6 billion, contribute to the viability of 121,000 other firms which include grocery stores, convenience stores, combination stores, farmer's markets, and other retail food stores; plus wholesalers and meal services.⁶

SNAP benefits are positively and significantly related to household food expenditures.⁷ Although estimates of the impact vary, studies have shown that a \$1 increase in the value of SNAP benefits of a typical recipient household leads to additional food expenditures of between 17 and 47 cents.⁸ SNAP recipients spend more dollars on food at local retailers in communities than eligible nonparticipants.

SNAP benefits can be used at authorized farmers markets that sell local produce. This provides additional customers for local farmers and provides SNAP recipients access to healthy, locally grown fruits and vegetables that might otherwise be unavailable to them.

SNAP Supports Work And Helps Low-Income People Make The Transition To Self-Sufficiency

More than 29 percent of SNAP households had earnings in 2008 and 40 percent of all SNAP participants lived in a household with earnings.⁹ Employees whose nutrition needs are met at home may be healthier and thus may take fewer sick days for themselves or their children. Employees may stay longer with companies that care about them by sharing information about SNAP benefits and its importance as a work support.

SNAP helps families become financially stable and make the transition to self-sufficiency, getting them through the tough times. Half of all new participants will leave the program within nine months.¹⁰

SNAP benefits are a work support. SNAP benefits help those leaving the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program and transitioning to work by supplementing their food budgets so that they can stay independent and work toward self-sufficiency.¹¹ Since SNAP benefits decrease only by 24 to 36 cents for every additional dollar of earnings, SNAP recipients have incentives to work since they will be better off working rather than receiving SNAP benefits alone.¹²

"A successful SNAP redemption program probably means that we are successfully servicing the needs of our community. By being able to meet our customers' needs during a particular time in their lives, we are often able to establish a relationship that outlives the time a person is eligible for SNAP benefits. In that case we benefit from that customer both now and in the future. SNAP redemption is a way to get your best customer in the front door and to establish a long-term relationship with that customer."

George Matics, Purchasing Director
Cardenas Markets, Inc. Ontario, California

5. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Research and Analysis, *Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2009*, by Joshua Leftin, Andrew Gothro, and Esa Eslami. Project Officer, Jenny Genser. Alexandria, VA: 2010. Available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/menu/Published/SNAP/SNAPPartHH.htm>
6. STARS Quarterly Management Activity Report, 10/23/04.
7. Fraker, Thomas M., Sharon K. Long, and Charles E. Post (1990). Analyses of the 1985 Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals--Volume I, Estimating Usual Dietary Intake, Assessing Dietary Adequacy, and Estimating Program Effects: Applications of Three Advanced Methodologies Using FNS's Four-Day Analysis File. Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service.

Also: Levedahl, JW. The Effect of Food Stamps on Household Food Expenditures. Technical Bulletin No. 1794. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture: Economic Research Service.

8. Fox, Mary Kay, William Hamilton, (editors) and Biing-Hwan Lin (2004). Effects of Food Assistance and Nutrition Programs on Nutrition and Health, Volume 3, Literature Review. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture: Economic Research Service, USDA, 2004. www.ers.usda.gov/publications/fanrr19-3
9. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Research and Analysis (ORA). Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2008, Summary. October 2009. Available at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/oane/MENU/Published/SNAP/FILES/Participation/2008CharacteristicsSummary.pdf>
10. Gleason, Phillip, Peter Schochet, and Robert Moffit (1998). The Dynamics of Food Stamp Program Participation in the Early 1990s. Alexandria, VA: U. S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Available at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/efan03012/efan03012ref.pdf>
11. Rosenbaum, Dorothy and David Super (2005). The Food Stamp Program: Working Smarter for Working Families. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Available at <http://www.cbpp.org/3-15-05fa.htm>

12. Ibid.

SNAP Helps Low-Income Families Make Healthy Food Choices And Put More Nutritious Food On The Table

Dietary patterns among low-income people, as well as those of the general public, indicate an excessive consumption of calories, unhealthy fats and sugars, while fruit, vegetable and whole grain intakes are modest.¹³ These poor eating habits contribute to making overweight and obesity a national health problem. In addition to the toll on personal health, this “epidemic” of obesity has economic implications as well. Obesity-attributable medical expenditures in the United States reached \$75 billion in 2003. Taxpayers financed about half of these costs through Medicare and Medicaid.¹⁴

However, research shows that low-income households participating in SNAP have access to more food energy, protein, and a broad array of essential vitamins and minerals in their home food supply compared to eligible nonparticipants.¹⁵ Nationwide, if there were a 5 percentage point increase in the SNAP participation rate, an additional 1.9 million low-income people would reap the nutrition benefits of SNAP. SNAP also helps participants manage their food resources more wisely through SNAP nutrition education. States may exercise the option to provide targeted nutrition education activities or social marketing campaigns designed to help persons eligible for SNAP make healthier food choices and pursue active lifestyles.

Because SNAP benefits are available to most low-income households with few resources, regardless of age, disability status, or family structure, SNAP households are a diverse group. Nine percent of SNAP recipients are aged 60 or older.¹⁶ For the elderly, a particularly vulnerable and underserved population, participation in SNAP and other food assistance programs can help improve nutritional status and well-being and increase independence. Nearly half of SNAP participants are children.¹⁷ Children who are well-nourished may have better attendance at school and, once there, may be more focused on learning.

“The additional support which [SNAP benefits] provide to needy individuals is readily seen in our stores that serve customers in low-income areas. This benefit not only helps those who require some additional assistance in making ends meet, but is also an aid to the supermarkets making a commitment to serving economically challenged communities. Our partnership with nonprofit organizations in outreaching to potential participants speaks to Pathmark’s commitment to this important program.”

RICH SAVNER, Director of Public Affairs and Government Relations
Pathmark Stores, Inc. Carteret, New Jersey

Combined Efforts Are Needed

SNAP is the cornerstone of the Nation’s nutrition safety net, providing assistance to those who qualify. It helps relieve pressure on emergency food providers, enabling them to provide more assistance to those who do not qualify for SNAP benefits. Because of the nutrition benefits to participants and the economic benefits to the Nation and to States and communities, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has made increasing participation in SNAP a priority. Increasing participation in SNAP requires the combined efforts of National, State, and local public leaders as well as nonprofit community agencies, employers, and anyone else who touches the lives of potentially eligible people.

13. Gleason P, Rangarajan A, Olson C. Dietary Intake and Dietary Attitudes Among Food Stamp Participants and Other Low-Income Individuals. Report prepared for the Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, September 2000. Available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/oane/MENU/Published/NutritionEducation/Files/FSPDiet.pdf>.

14. Obesity Costs States Billions in Medical Expenses. Press Release. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, January 21, 2004. <http://www.cdc.gov/media>

15. Devaney, Barbara, Pamela Haines, and Robert Moffitt (1989). Assessing the Dietary Effects of the Food Stamp Program -Volumes I and II. Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service.

Also: Allen, Joyce E., and Kenneth E. Gadson (1983). Nutrient Consumption Patterns of Low-Income Households. Technical Bulletin No. 1685. Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.

Also: Fox, Mary Kay, William Hamilton, (editors) and Biing-Hwan Lin (2004). Effects of Food Assistance and Nutrition Programs on Nutrition and Health, Volume 3, Literature Review. Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.

16. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation. Characteristics of Food Stamp Households: Fiscal Year 2003, FSP-04-CHAR, by Karen Cunyningham and Beth Brown. Project Officer, Kate Fink. Alexandria, VA: 2004. Available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/SNAP/FILES/Participation/2003Characteristics.pdf>.

17. Ibid.

The rest of this “Introduction” section provides an explanation of the Toolkit, an overview of SNAP, SNAP question-and-answer sheets (Q&As), talking points, information about nutrition education providers, and other background materials.

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

Why was this toolkit developed?

We all have a common goal: to improve the ability of low-income people to access nutritious food by participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The information and materials in this toolkit will help you share information about SNAP benefits with those who are eligible but not participating. They will also help you let potential partners, government officials, and the public know how SNAP participation helps the local economy and addresses the national health problem of obesity.

What is SNAP outreach?

SNAP outreach is providing information or assistance to someone who might be eligible for SNAP. The goals of SNAP outreach are to help people make an informed decision about whether to apply for the program, and ultimately to increase participation by eligible individuals and families.

What is in the toolkit?

This toolkit includes information on:

- The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Maximizing your outreach efforts through developing partnerships, coordinating local events, and working with your local SNAP office
- Publicizing your outreach through media relations and optimized press releases
- Placing public service announcements (PSAs) and paid advertising
- Resources



Tips & Tools

Each section features easy-to-follow instructions, helpful hints, and useful materials (such as PSA scripts, frequently asked questions, and suggested responses).

We also have included samples and templates (for letters, calendar listings, etc.) that you can customize with local and State specifics and enhance with information about your organization.

How do I use the toolkit?

The materials in this toolkit show a number of outreach possibilities and offer your organization the flexibility to pick and choose pieces that work for your specific needs. Throughout the toolkit there are tip sheets that you can duplicate for yourself and your colleagues. Do not worry if your organization has limited resources and staff. You do not have to conduct every one of these activities or invest a lot of time in each one. Do what works best for you and your community.

Target Populations

Findings show that, in addition to the general low-income audience, there are distinct groups that are significantly underrepresented in accessing SNAP benefits. The national outreach campaign is focused on reaching:

- **GENERAL LOW-INCOME** Eligible, nonparticipating individuals and families;
- **WORKING POOR** Employed individuals and families who may not understand that even though they work, they still might qualify;
- **ELDERLY** People 60 years old or older who may have misunderstandings about the process and potential benefits; and
- **LEGAL IMMIGRANTS*** Immigrants may misunderstand eligibility requirements related to citizenship.

**Recent immigrants who are in various stages of their U.S. citizenship process could benefit from this educational effort. You may want to connect with local SNAP eligibility workers in your community to identify other distinct groups to target. Some FNS outreach materials are available in 35 languages and can be downloaded from the FNS Web site. Refer to the [Resources](#) section of this toolkit.*

How do I get started with outreach?

The best way to begin is to ask other organizations in your community if they are currently conducting a SNAP outreach project or if they have a resource guide, task force, or advisory group. Your local SNAP office is a good starting point for such a discussion. That office can share State and local information and may also have informational materials to add to your effort. By working together, you will be able to further your goals and avoid duplication.

As you start your project, be sure to keep local SNAP offices informed of your activities. Explore ways of working together to reduce application barriers — the best outreach efforts will not work if people run into barriers at the SNAP office. Extended office hours, childcare areas in waiting rooms, and shorter applications are some examples of how SNAP offices can increase accessibility. Potential roadblocks such as crowded offices, long waiting lines, or repeated visits to the SNAP office may counter your efforts to educate potential applicants about SNAP and prepare them for certification interviews.

Are funds available to help pay for my outreach project?

One potential way to pay for part of your outreach project is to contact your State SNAP agency about an optional State outreach plan. Outreach is an allowable administrative cost for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for State SNAP agencies. States can receive 50 percent reimbursement from the Federal Government for necessary, reasonable, and allowable outreach expenditures. Your State agency has the option of contracting outreach activities to community and faith-based organizations under a State outreach plan. If a State chooses to do this, State contracting rules apply.

Before contacting your State agency, prepare your business case as to why outreach activities should be contracted to your organization. Be ready to provide your State agency with the following information, at a minimum:

- Background information about your organization
- Target group(s) for the outreach project
- Need in your community for the project
- Services that you will provide
- Funding you will contribute, if any
- Donated time

To learn more about SNAP outreach activities that can be contracted by States, review the FNS guidance to States. This guidance includes examples of allowable and nonallowable outreach activities and the fiscal policies for State plans. Also outlined in the guidance are the provisions under which waivers are granted to States to use private, third-party donations as their share of the cost.

Can I provide nutrition education too?

Similar to outreach, nutrition education is an allowable administrative cost for SNAP. States can receive 50 percent reimbursement from the Federal Government for necessary, reasonable, and allowable SNAP nutrition education expenditures. Almost all States have optional nutrition education plans in place. If you are interested in offering nutrition education to your clients, a good first step is to make your interest known to State SNAP officials and the nutrition education cooperators who are participating in the nutrition education plan for your State.

For a list of nutrition education cooperators, go to SNAP Nutrition Connection Web site at www.nal.usda.gov/foodstamp/Stategates/index.html.

What outreach is happening on a national level and how do we fit in?

USDA has a nationwide effort to educate and inform eligible nonparticipants—with special emphasis on working poor, elderly, and immigrants— about Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

The primary goals of the campaign are to increase enrollment in SNAP and to reinforce its role as a nutrition assistance program. The objectives of the education effort were developed with advice and input from many local SNAP offices and partners. These objectives are to:

- Expand awareness of SNAP as a nutrition assistance and work support program;
- Inform eligible, unenrolled people about where and how they can apply; and
- Ensure that people who are eligible to enroll have reasonable access and can participate with dignity and respect.

This effort, designed to raise awareness of and change beliefs about SNAP, includes promotion of a national toll-free information line (1-800-221-5689) through a variety of paid radio advertisements in English and Spanish. These advertisements run on stations in major population centers, and in areas with particularly large numbers of eligible but unenrolled populations. Using fiscal year 2003 as a baseline for evaluation, markets carrying ads with the SNAP national hotline number averaged a 270 percent increase in information packets over the course of a seven year campaign period. (Calls could not be tracked in the areas where the ads offer a local toll-free number rather than a national one.)

What if I have more questions?

If you have any questions about this toolkit, or about how to conduct outreach to increase local enrollment in SNAP, please e-mail us at fspoutreach@fns.usda.gov or refer to the FNS Web site, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/default.htm>.

You may also wish to tap the Food Stamp Outreach Coalition, a Web-based network of national antihunger advocacy groups and partner organizations, for helpful insight about ways to reach SNAP target audiences. Details about this group can be found in the “[Resources](#)” section under “General SNAP Outreach Resources,” or by visiting <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/about.htm>



Recipe for Success

Whether you work at a food bank, at a community or faith-based organization, or with the State or county government, you are an important part of this national effort to inform low-income people across the country about how they and their families can eat right, even when money's tight. The outreach you conduct on a local level is a vital part of the national campaign.

Common SNAP Myths

Four Common SNAP Myths Heard From Potential Applicants

MYTH: “SNAP is a welfare program.”

TRUTH: SNAP is a nutrition assistance program designed to help individuals and families buy nutritious food when money’s tight.

MYTH: “Some people receive only \$10 a month in SNAP benefits.”

TRUTH: While some receive \$10, the average SNAP benefit per person is about \$101 per month (fiscal year 2008 data).

MYTH: “You cannot get SNAP benefits if you have a job.”

TRUTH: Individuals may work and still have income low enough to receive SNAP benefits. In fact, nearly 40 percent of SNAP households had earnings in 2008.

MYTH: “Other people need SNAP benefits more than I do.”

TRUTH: By receiving SNAP benefits, you are not taking benefits away from another person. Everyone who applies and is determined to be eligible by the State/local eligibility worker will get SNAP benefits.

Four Common SNAP Myths Heard From Eligibility Workers

MYTH: “Outreach could mean more quality control errors.”

TRUTH: The number of low-income people participating in SNAP is growing; however, the error rate is at an all-time low.

MYTH: “Community workers cannot prescreen for eligibility or help gather verification documents.”

TRUTH: Community groups can prescreen clients using the FNS prescreening tool known as “Step 1” (or the State prescreening tool, if one exists). Additionally, they can help fill out application forms, gather verification information, etc. However, the responsibility for the actual certification of households for program benefits remains with SNAP staff.

MYTH: “Certification interviews must be held at local SNAP offices.”

TRUTH: Local SNAP offices can take applications or certify households for benefits at remote locations such as food bank and grocery stores. Local offices may offer telephone interviews when appropriate.

MYTH: “Outreach will increase my workload.”

TRUTH: Community workers help potential applicants gather appropriate verification documents so that clients are better prepared for the interview and bring the proper paperwork.



Overview of SNAP Program

Nutrition Assistance

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the cornerstone of the Federal nutrition assistance safety net, serving as the first line of defense against hunger. SNAP provides much-needed nutrition support to millions of low-income people. Nearly half of them are children.

Economic Benefits

Not only does SNAP help individuals and families when money’s tight, but your State and local community also benefit. The average SNAP benefit per person is about \$101 per month (fiscal year 2008 data), which is spent in local grocery stores. In fact, every \$5 in new Federal SNAP benefits generates almost double the amount in local economic activity. Also, every additional dollar in SNAP benefits generates 17 to 47 cents of new spending on food.

Electronic Issuance

In June 2004, SNAP completed a transformation from paper coupons to an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card. Participants receive a plastic EBT card (similar to a bank debit card) with the dollar amount for which they are eligible each month. There is evidence that EBT also decreases fraudulent use of SNAP benefits.

Underserved Population

Millions of low-income people are not accessing the nutrition benefits for which they qualify. To be effective, it is important that our national and local outreach efforts counter myths about SNAP among those who think they are not eligible or have beliefs that discourage them from enrolling.

SNAP Fact Sheet

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is the first line of defense against hunger. On average, it helps more than 28 million (fiscal year 2008 data) low-income people buy nutritious food each month and make healthy food choices within a limited budget. Eating healthier foods helps low-income people and their families stay well and have the energy they need for today's active lifestyles.

To apply for SNAP benefits, a person must go through the local SNAP office. If it is not possible to get to the office, a person may apply by telephone or make an appointment for another time or place. Any knowledgeable adult in the family can initiate an application, or the household may designate an "authorized representative" to apply for them.

Eligibility Requirements

Applicants must have **INCOMES** under certain levels, based on household size. A household is defined as people who live together and eat meals together.

Applicants may have **RESOURCES**, but they must be less than a certain level:

- \$2,000 for most households
- \$3,000 for a household with an elderly person (age 60 or older) or disabled person
- Most States exempt one or more vehicles from household resources
- A household's home does not count as a resource

An immigrant is eligible to apply for SNAP benefits if he/she:

- Has been in the United States as a legal resident for five years
- Is a legal immigrant child (not born in the United States)
- Has earned, or can be credited with, 40 quarters of work
- Is a refugee or asylee
- Has a military connection
- Is a member of certain Indian tribes

NOTE: A child born in the United States or a legal immigrant child is eligible for SNAP benefits, even if other household members are not eligible because of their immigration status.

Please check with your local SNAP office for more information about these eligibility requirements.

The amount of the SNAP benefit for each household takes into account the household's income, current living expenses, and resources.



Outreach Tools

SNAP outreach is critical to reaching those low-income people who are not aware that they may be eligible for, or do not know how to apply for, program benefits. The Food and Nutrition Service has several efforts under way to help with local outreach:

Tools Available

- A prescreening eligibility tool, written at the 6th grade level in both English and Spanish, is available for anyone with Internet access. The tool helps people learn if they are eligible and how much they might receive in monthly benefits. www.snap-step1.usda.gov/fns/
- A toll-free information line (1-800-221-5689) is available in Spanish and English.
- Free educational posters and flyers in Spanish and English can be ordered at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/default.htm>.
- Five basics documents in 36 languages can be found online at www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/translations.htm.
- A national SNAP Outreach Coalition brings together national and local organizations interested in SNAP outreach and helps to empower these groups to do more and better outreach.
- The SNAP Outreach Coalition listserv was developed to be a communication mechanism for those interested in outreach at the local, State, and national levels, and to share ideas among groups. To join, send an e-mail to fsoc@fns.usda.gov.
- Certified households receive their benefits through a debit card called an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card. EBT cardholder accounts are credited monthly, and SNAP recipients spend their benefits by using the card to buy eligible food in authorized retail food stores. Only food and certain food preparation items can be purchased with SNAP benefits.

SNAP Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is SNAP?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is a nutrition assistance program that helps low-income families and individuals purchase nutritious, healthy food. It is the cornerstone of the Nation's nutrition assistance safety net. The U.S. Department of Agriculture oversees SNAP at the Federal level through its Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). State agencies administer the program at State and local levels. Their responsibilities include determining eligibility and distributing benefits.

Who is eligible to receive SNAP benefits?

Anyone who meets the eligibility requirements can get SNAP benefits. Household income and other resources have to be under certain limits and are reviewed. The program allows for certain deductions like housing costs, child support, medical expenses, or child-care costs. A household may also have up to \$2000 in assets. Households with a member age 60 or older—or a disabled member—may have up to \$3000 in assets. Assets that do not count toward eligibility requirements include: a home, a vehicle to carry a physically disabled member of a household, the fair market value of one vehicle (up to \$4,650; higher limits in most States), and the resources of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients. Specific details are outlined in the FNS-313 brochure at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/translations.htm>.

Where can I go to find out if I'm eligible to receive SNAP benefits?

If you have access to a computer, you can quickly find out if you might qualify for SNAP benefits through the prescreening tool available on the USDA Web site, www.snap-step1.usda.gov/fns/. Local SNAP offices can provide information about eligibility, and USDA operates a toll-free number (1-800-221-5689) for people to call if they want to receive information about SNAP by mail. Most States also have a toll-free information/hotline number that can be found at www.fns.usda.gov/snap/contact_info/hotlines.htm.

Some community organizations work closely with SNAP offices and can provide information on the application process.

What is the EBT card?

All 50 States have made the transition from paper coupons to the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card. The EBT card is like a debit card and can be used at USDA-authorized grocery stores across the country. At the cash register, the customer or cashier swipes the EBT card through the card reader at the point of sale and the customer enters a personal identification number to secure the transaction. The system deducts the exact dollar amount of the purchase from the customer's EBT account and deposits it into the retailer's bank account. Once the SNAP EBT transaction is complete, a receipt shows the amount of the SNAP purchase and the amount of SNAP benefits remaining in the EBT account.

SNAP Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What are some of SNAP's benefits?

SNAP benefits provide much-needed help so that low-income people can put good, healthy food on the table. SNAP benefits help with the grocery bill. Households can use benefits to purchase breads, cereals, fruits and vegetables, meats, fish and poultry, and dairy products. Many States offer free nutrition education materials and programs for SNAP benefit recipients. [\[Localize here if your State offers materials and/or classes.\]](#)

SNAP benefits also help the local community. Each \$5 in new SNAP benefits generates almost twice that amount in economic activity for the community. Plus, SNAP benefits are funded with Federal dollars — so when everyone who is eligible for the program receives benefits, State and local economies also benefit.

Why is there a national SNAP outreach effort?

Currently, only about 65 percent of those eligible for SNAP benefits are enrolled. The goal of this national SNAP outreach effort is to raise awareness of SNAP eligibility and benefits. The campaign includes promoting a national toll-free information line (1-800-221-5689) (or State toll-free lines where available) through a variety of English and Spanish radio advertisements in major population centers and in areas with large numbers of eligible but unenrolled people.

Who is involved in SNAP outreach?

SNAP outreach is a community-wide effort enlisting the help of State and local SNAP offices, faith-based groups, food banks, and others. Together, these groups play an important role in helping low-income families learn about and access SNAP. Community groups can help in many ways. For example, they can distribute informational materials, conduct prescreening for program eligibility, provide application assistance and forms, and help gather verification documents.

A core group of national antihunger advocacy groups and other organizations are part of a group called the SNAP Outreach Coalition. The Coalition members also collaborate to promote the nutrition benefits of SNAP through outreach to local antihunger projects.

SNAP Talking Points And Messages

Following are suggested talking points regarding SNAP. You are encouraged to localize this information with State or local SNAP data, or promote State-specific resources such as a toll-free SNAP information line or prescreening tool.

SNAP is the first line of defense against hunger.

- SNAP benefits provide much-needed temporary help with the grocery bill so that low-income people can put nutritious, healthy food on the table.
- Nearly half of those who receive SNAP benefits are children.

SNAP is a nutrition program that helps low-income families and individuals purchase nutritious, healthy food. It is the cornerstone of the Nation's nutrition assistance safety net.

- Low-income people get financial support to help with their grocery bills so they can buy fruits and vegetables, whole-grain foods, dairy products, and other healthy foods. In addition, many SNAP participants are offered free nutrition education materials and classes to help them make good purchasing choices and stretch their food dollars.

SNAP has made some fundamental changes in recent years that make it easier to:

- Find out about the program
 - Individuals can call [1-800-221-5689](tel:1-800-221-5689) for a free information packet to learn more about SNAP and how to apply. Information is available in English and Spanish.
 - Individuals can go to a Web site featuring a prescreening tool and, by answering a few simple questions, determine if they are eligible for SNAP benefits and how much they might receive. The Web site address is www.snap-step1.usda.gov/fns/snap.
- Apply for benefits
 - FNS and States are working to simplify the application process.
- Shop for healthy food
 - There are no more paper coupons. Now, benefits are delivered with an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) card that works like a debit card at the grocery store.

SNAP is a win-win for low-income people, local retailers, and local communities.

- Each \$5 in new SNAP benefits generates almost twice that amount in economic activity for the community.
- The average benefit per person is about \$101 a month (fiscal year 2008 data). That translates into money spent at local grocery stores.
- SNAP benefits are funded with Federal dollars. When everyone who is eligible for the program receives benefits, State and local economies also benefit.
- Research shows that low-income households participating in SNAP have access to more food energy, protein, and an array of essential vitamins and minerals in their home food supply compared to eligible nonparticipants.
- Since SNAP benefits help defray the costs of buying healthy foods, low-income people are less likely to have to make hard choices between eating right and paying for other essentials.

USDA and the antihunger community are working as partners to ensure that everyone who is eligible for SNAP knows about it and is able to access benefits.

- Many low-income people are not aware of their eligibility and how to apply, particularly those who are working, seniors, or legal immigrants.
- To ensure that everyone who is eligible knows about the benefits of the program, USDA is conducting a national media campaign.

SNAP Questions & Suggested Answers

Why are Questions and Answers (Q&As) important? Q&As are anticipated questions and suggested answers that program administrators and outreach spokespeople can study to help get ready for media interviews or other public speaking. You might receive these questions from the media, the public, or others.

Here are some examples of Q&As about SNAP outreach:

Why are you encouraging people to enroll in SNAP?

RESPONSE

SNAP is a nutrition assistance program that helps low-income people put healthy food on the table. SNAP supplements the food budgets of low-income people who are having a tough time paying for food for themselves or their families. Children have important nutritional needs and they make up about half of those currently receiving SNAP benefits. We want everyone who is eligible to have the opportunity to apply for benefits so that they can have access to healthier diets. Our outreach efforts are specially targeted to people who are least likely to understand that they may be eligible: elderly persons, immigrants, and working poor.

Why are you encouraging the use of SNAP benefits when application numbers are increasing already?

RESPONSE

Yes, enrollment numbers are increasing. However, there are still many people who need help. Currently, in an average month, more than 13 million eligible households are NOT receiving SNAP benefits. This is usually because they do not think they qualify, or think there are people in greater need of the benefits. We want to reach out to those people, encourage them to get prescreened, and, if appropriate, apply for SNAP benefits so they can get help with their grocery bills. SNAP benefits are not only good for low-income people; they also help the local economy.

Are the financial benefits worth the effort to enroll?

RESPONSE

SNAP benefits are not intended to be the only means of paying the grocery bill, but they do help low-income people purchase healthier food items, such as fruits and vegetables. Monthly benefits vary based on income and household size. On average, an eligible person receives around \$101 per month (fiscal year 2008 data). This additional support will help low-income households purchase nutritious foods for a healthy diet.

SNAP Questions & Suggested Answers

Can people purchase whatever they want with their SNAP benefits?

RESPONSE

SNAP benefits are intended to supplement a households' grocery budgets and help them purchase healthier foods. Households can use SNAP benefits to purchase a wide range of food items. Participants are encouraged to use their SNAP benefits wisely to maximize their nutrition impact and economic value. To that end, they are encouraged to buy nutrient-dense foods such as whole-grain bread and cereals; fruits and vegetables; low fat meats, fish, and poultry and milk products. Other items that can be purchased with SNAP benefits are seeds and plants that produce food. Nonfood items cannot be bought with SNAP benefits.

I have heard that enrolling in SNAP is difficult. What does it involve?

RESPONSE

USDA and State and local agencies that administer SNAP are working to improve the application process by simplifying forms, offering extended office hours, and, in some instances, allowing online applications. Anyone can check to see if they might qualify for benefits through an online prescreening process at www.snap-step1.usda.gov/fns/.

Anyone interested in finding out more about how to apply should call 1-800-221-5689 for information. [Localize this information if your State or community has a toll-free number.]

How long does it take to start receiving benefits?

RESPONSE

If you are in special need because of very low income, you may receive benefits within 7 days, if eligible. However, for others, it may take up to 30 days to receive benefits. At the time of application, an eligibility worker will give applicants this type of information.

SNAP Questions & Suggested Answers

What measures are taken to prevent SNAP fraud?

RESPONSE

USDA is committed to integrity in all of its nutrition assistance programs. USDA has taken several steps to make it easier to identify and punish those who misuse SNAP benefits. Retailers who violate program rules, recipients who try to obtain their benefits based on false information, or recipients who sell their benefits can be removed from the program, fined, and even jailed. Also, with the introduction of the electronic benefit card (EBT), which works much like a debit card at a grocery store, the USDA is better able to track and deter fraud.

Doesn't the EBT card make it easier for people to abuse the system?

RESPONSE

No. The EBT card makes it more difficult for people to commit SNAP fraud. EBT eliminates paper food stamps and creates an electronic record for each transaction, making fraud easier to detect. Not only does the EBT card cut down on SNAP abuse, but it also reduces the stigma some people associate with receiving SNAP benefits.

Why are you advertising a free benefit for poor people?

RESPONSE

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is a nutrition program that helps low-income people have better diets, and better eating can mean better health. There are many people who are eligible for SNAP benefits but are not participating in the program. SNAP is a win-win for local retailers and local communities. Each \$5 in new SNAP benefits generates almost twice that amount in economic activity for the community. Average SNAP benefits are about \$101 a month per person (fiscal year 2008 data), translating to money spent in local grocery stores. Everyone wins when eligible people take advantage of benefits to which they are entitled.

Nutrition Education Providers In Your Community

Many communities have a wealth of information available to help your organization promote the nutrition benefits of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Focusing on nutrition can help your organization get the attention of individuals who might not be inclined to pick up SNAP informational materials. This gives your organization an opportunity to explain SNAP as a nutrition assistance program to potential applicants as well as employers, community leaders, and others, who might still associate SNAP with welfare programs. Learn more about SNAP nutrition education providers in your community and what role each organization can play to increase SNAP participation.

What is the goal of SNAP Nutrition Education?

The goal of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is to improve the likelihood that persons eligible for SNAP will make healthy food choices within their limited budget and choose active lifestyles, as the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the USDA Food Guidance System (MyPyramid) recommend.

Why should my organization consider collaborating with SNAP Nutrition Education providers?

Outreach and SNAP Nutrition Education can work together to communicate messages about how SNAP can help needy families obtain healthy foods. The possibility of better nutrition can help generate interest in SNAP among potentially eligible persons as well as community workers serving that population. SNAP Nutrition Education providers have conducted needs assessments to identify which nutrition messages to promote and strategies for communicating these messages to SNAP-eligible population. They also have access to nutrition education materials that are consistent with national nutrition initiatives. By working together, outreach and nutrition education can communicate accurate, unified, and reinforcing messages that have a more powerful reach.

FNS recently developed a series of nutrition education and promotion materials targeting mothers entitled Loving Your Family, Feeding their Future: Nutrition Education Through the Food Stamp Program. The nutrition education messages are based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. These nutrition education messages address the needs of English and Spanish speaking mothers with limited literacy skills. This series of education materials includes an educator's handbook, four discussion sessions with accompanying participant handouts, participant guidebook, and an online educator's learning module with a flash video component. These materials were developed primarily for SNAP Nutrition Education participants, however, they can be used in other nutrition education settings with similar target audiences such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program. Educators can access Loving Your Family... materials at <http://foodstamp.nal.usda.gov>.



Learn More About SNAP Nutrition Education

States often provide nutrition education to SNAP participants through contracts with the Cooperative Extension System, State Nutrition Networks, public health departments, and other organizations.

SNAP Nutrition Connection, a project of the USDA Food and Nutrition Service and the National Agricultural Library, maintains a list of State SNAP Nutrition Education providers. You can access it online at http://snap.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index.php?info_center=15&tax_level=1, request a print copy by phone at 301-504-5719, or e-mail FSNC@nal.usda.gov.

You can also contact your State or local SNAP offices for information on SNAP Nutrition Education activities in your area.

SNAP Name Change

Introduction: SNAP: A New Era in Nutrition Assistance

In the summer of 2008, the U.S. Congress passed the Food, Conservation and Energy Act (also known as the Farm Bill) mandating a new national name for the Food Stamp Program (FSP). The Farm Bill renamed the FSP as “Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program” (SNAP), but States were not mandated by Congress to use the new name. Visit [this chart](#) for a list of current State names.

This chapter describes the reasons for the name change and provides information your organization can use should you have an opportunity to participate in name change discussions with your State. If your State is using the SNAP name, this chapter includes strategies and tools to help you communicate the new name to those you serve. It also discusses challenges and solutions related to rebranding the program from food stamps to SNAP. Finally, the chapter provides guidance on how to use the new branding elements, such as the graphic (logo) and tagline.

What is SNAP?

SNAP is the new national name for the Federal FSP. Each year SNAP helps an average of more than 40 million people in 18 million households supplement their grocery budgets.¹ As the cornerstone of the Nation’s nutrition assistance safety net, SNAP is a vital program, particularly for some of our society’s most vulnerable citizens, including children and seniors.

1. National Level Annual Summary for Persons and Households, 2010. Available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/snapmain/htm>

Are States required to use the new name?

No. States administering the program are not required to change the name to SNAP. Nevertheless, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) does encourage the use of the new national name. Over time, FNS, other Federal agencies, and States will no longer refer to the FSP. Therefore, it is important to educate consumers about the name change.

Who administers SNAP?

The same State agencies that administered the FSP administer SNAP.

When Congress renamed the program, did they make any changes to the rules?

Yes, the 2008 Farm Bill made improvements to SNAP in the following ways:

- **An increase in the [minimum benefit](#)** and standard deduction;
- **The elimination of the cap** on dependent care deduction (child care and care for elderly or disabled household members); and
- **The exclusion of education and retirement accounts** from countable resources.

What are the key reasons for the name change?

- **The new name focuses on nutrition.** The program helps low-income people eat a more nutritious diet by supplementing their food budget. Households receiving SNAP benefits can use extra food dollars to buy healthy foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat milk products.
- **The new name reflects a more modern program.** Today, electronic benefit transfer (EBT) is the sole means of benefit issuance. There are no more stamps or coupons. This has not only helped to reduce program stigma, but it has cut down on fraud and costs associated with printing, storing, and distributing coupons.
- **The new name reduces stigma associated with “food stamps.”** Historically, some participants felt embarrassed to apply for benefits or use their coupons at grocery stores. The new name helps reduce stigma by stressing the importance of nutrition. The EBT card also reduces the appearance that the user is different from any other shopper.

Why should my State use the SNAP name?

The following are several reasons why your organization should encourage your State agency to change the name to SNAP:

- **It promotes healthy eating.** Changing the name is an opportunity to promote messages about healthy eating to those you serve. The SNAP name focuses on the importance of nutrition.
- **It reflects the program’s current format.** The new name reflects a change to the program and its current format for issuing benefits, which is an EBT card, not stamps or coupons.
- **It reduces program stigma.** The new name can reduce the stigma associated with the FSP. The new name helps your State promote the nutrition benefits of the program, new policies that make it easier to access, and the use of EBT cards.
- **It helps avoid confusion.** FNS is working hard to transition the name change from FSP to SNAP. Keeping the State’s program name consistent with the Federal name makes it clear that this is not a different program. Caregivers living in other States and new or transferring applicants will have an easier time locating the local SNAP office. By making your program’s brand consistent with the national SNAP brand, you are ultimately raising awareness about your program and encouraging more eligible individuals and families to apply.
- **It allows you and your State to take advantage of nationally developed materials and outreach activities.** FNS has developed a range of outreach and nutrition education materials with the SNAP name that local offices and partners can use. The change includes a new logo and tagline. By using a different name, your State may have to divert limited resources to cover the costs to develop similar materials. FNS also buys paid radio advertising to promote SNAP in various markets across the country each year. Because the SNAP name is used in the spots, your State agency might elect not to run the paid advertising and miss this opportunity to promote the program.



Did You Know?

- Program participants in States now using the new name SNAP do not need to reapply to continue receiving benefits.
- The new national name, SNAP, highlights USDA FNS’ focus on nutrition and putting healthy food within reach for low-income households.
- Nutrition education is available to help SNAP applicants and participants learn to make healthy eating and active lifestyle choices.
- Children automatically qualify for free school breakfast and lunch when they receive SNAP benefits. Some participants may qualify for WIC benefits, as well.
- Program benefits are issued on Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards, similar to debit cards, and can be used in authorized retail stores and farmers markets nationwide.
- As of June 17, 2009, food stamp coupons are no longer accepted at any grocery, convenience store, or farmers market.
- SNAP is good for communities. Research shows that every \$5 in new SNAP benefits generates up to \$9.20—nearly twice as much—in total community spending.

- **People like the name SNAP.** During consumer focus groups, the majority of participants responded positively to the new name. Respondents said that SNAP explains the purpose of the program and emphasizes how this nutrition benefit helps individuals and families.

The Power of a Strong Brand

As you participate in discussions to change your State's program name, you may wish to consider the power behind strong brands. By working together using a single brand, States, community organizations, and the Federal Government can leverage all outreach resources and use them to educate low-income Americans about SNAP.

Each day, American consumers are bombarded by hundreds of messages and images. The public has an overwhelming number of products, services, and programs to choose from, making it difficult to break through the clutter. Companies and organizations try to differentiate themselves by creating a brand.

What is a brand?

A brand is two things. First, it is a name or a symbol that is commonly known to identify an organization, product, or service. Second, a brand separates one organization, product, or service from competing organizations, products, or services.

What are the benefits of a brand?

The benefits of a brand are significant. A brand:

- **Provides recognition:** It helps your audience connect an organization with a product or service, thereby increasing credibility.
- **Promotes loyalty:** When your audiences trust your brand, they are more likely to be loyal to it.
- **Implies solidity and stability:** While there are dynamic, small organizations that have strong brands, a brand often projects an image of an established, large organization which, in turn, attracts more people to it.
- **Suggests quality:** Whether it represents a great product or superb customer service, a brand usually equates to something that is "better" than the unbranded alternative.
- **Connotes experience and reliability:** It projects a sense of longevity and a more trustworthy organization or product.

What has FNS done to establish the SNAP brand?

FNS has developed and focus group-tested a logo and messages with consumers. It has also developed [guidelines](#) for how to use the brand in outreach materials and advertising. The guidelines tell where to get different versions of the SNAP logo to suit your needs.

What is the SNAP brand?

The SNAP brand focuses on nutrition. At the heart of the SNAP brand is the idea that eating nutritious foods is important for everyone and that the program is meant to supplement the grocery budget of low-income individuals and families during tough times.

What are some of the national SNAP brand's core elements?

- **A positioning statement:** This defines vision and values. It establishes a tone, describes what the program means in terms of the emotional and practical needs of the customer, and serves as “umbrella language” from which key messages for target audiences are derived.

SNAP POSITIONING STATEMENT

Putting healthy food within reach.

Good nutrition and physical activity are an essential part of a healthy lifestyle. But sometimes, bills and unexpected expenses make it difficult to buy healthy food. When that happens, SNAP can put healthy food within reach and provide information to help choose nutritious food.

SNAP is the new name for the Federal Food Stamp Program. SNAP stands for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The new name reflects changes made to meet the needs of our clients. More benefits are accessible to more people. Through nutrition education partners, SNAP helps clients learn to make healthy eating and active lifestyle choices.

With SNAP, healthy food is within reach even when times are tough.

- **A tagline:** A good tagline is a way to quickly and powerfully connect with the public, and it is the first impression of your brand. The national SNAP tagline, which was developed through research and testing, is: *Putting Healthy Food Within Reach*. The Spanish version of this tagline is: *Alimentos Saludables a Su Alcance*.

ENGLISH TAGLINE

Putting Healthy Food Within Reach

SPANISH TAGLINE

Alimentos Saludables a Su Alcance

- **A visual:** A logo is a visual. It is a graphic depiction of your organization, product, service, or program. It has the ability to quickly stir emotions or persuade people to find out more about what it represents. The more your audience positively connects a logo with its owner, the more brand equity or value is built. A relationship begins to form between the brand and the customer. Once that relationship is firmly established, all a customer needs to do is see the logo to know what he or she will get from that brand. While consistency in visuals is important, they do change to keep up with the times.

The official SNAP logo was designed based on focus group research with both current participants and eligible nonparticipants. The logo emphasizes the importance of a well-balanced diet by mirroring the colors used for each food group in MyPyramid and focuses on nutrition by showing healthy foods in a grocery bag.

ENGLISH



Tips & Tools

For more information, FNS has developed specific [guidelines](#) regarding the use of the SNAP logo.

SPANISH



SNAP Logo Usage Guidelines

Non-Interference and Sizing

Standard practice is to use the logo and wordmark with the tagline.

Non-interference space for the logo is .25 inches surrounding its outer diameter (farthest point of logo, outward), illustrated below.



The minimum size of the logo is 1.5 inches in width, illustrated below. This is the preferred smallest size for readability, and any variations reducing this size for usage should be cleared with USDA Food and Nutrition Service.



When using the color version, use logo file colors as provided ONLY. Occasionally, it may be necessary to use a black and white version of the SNAP mark. Please find below suitable example, in place of the color version.



SNAP Logo Requests

To request an electronic version of the SNAP logo and tagline, please email SNAPHQ-web@fns.usda.gov with the subject line SNAP Logo Request. Carefully follow logo guidelines. The logo comes in multiple formats, in color, and in black and white.

In your email request, please specify:

- the logo format you want (e.g., high resolution, low resolution, or .eps file)
- what color logo you want (e.g., black and white or color)
- desired logo language (e.g., English or Spanish)
- how you plan to use the logo

SNAP Color Palette

Dark Green	Light Green	Cyan	Purple	Red	Orange
C: 98 M: 0 Y: 72 K: 61	C: 75 M: 0 Y: 80 K: 0	C: 100 M: 0 Y: 0 K: 0	C: 70 M: 80 Y: 0 K: 0	C: 15 M: 98 Y: 100 K: 10	C: 0 M: 60 Y: 100 K: 0
R: 0 G: 88 B: 61	R: 47 G: 181 B: 106	R: 0 G: 174 B: 239	R: 105 G: 80 B: 161	R: 191 G: 38 B: 36	R: 245 G: 130 B: 32

What are some of the national SNAP brand's core elements?

- **SNAP message platform.** A message platform contains several core messages. These messages were developed based on the target audience and designed to create consistent branding of the program. Key and supporting messages are intended to be woven into all SNAP materials, advertising, talking points, speeches, and presentations.

The following are the official SNAP key messages:

- As of October 1, 2008, SNAP became the new name for the Federal Food Stamp Program.
- SNAP stands for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and reflects the changes we've made to meet the needs of our clients, including a focus on nutrition and an increase in benefit amounts.
- Through nutrition education partners, SNAP helps clients learn to make healthy eating and active lifestyle choices.
- Changes have been made to make the program more accessible.
- The program continues to stimulate the local economy. Research shows that every \$5 of new benefits generates up to \$9.20 in total community spending.
- SNAP puts healthy food within reach for low-income Americans.
- SNAP responds quickly to meet sudden need. Benefits are available in as little as 7 days in an emergency.
- Feeding children is a priority for SNAP. Out of every \$4 in benefits, \$3 go to families with children.
- SNAP is the Federal name for the program. State programs may have a different name.



5 Guidelines for Building Strong Brands

1. **Brand identity.** Have an identity for your brand. How would you like people to perceive your program? What image do you want it to convey?
2. **Value proposition.** Know what value your brand brings to people's lives and convey that through visuals and written words.
3. **Brand position.** Understand how your program's brand fits into the larger national brand.
4. **Execution.** Execute the communication program so that your State brand will be durable enough to convey your program over time.
5. **Consistency.** Having a consistent identity over an extended time is essential to a strong brand. Once you decide on your brand, maintain the symbols, imagery, and metaphors that work. This will increase awareness of your State's program.

Co-Branding: Highlighting Your Unique Brand While Adopting SNAP

While your organization is unique, your work on SNAP outreach is part of the larger national effort. To that end, you may want to consider co-branding your organization or program with SNAP.

What is co-branding?

Co-branding is the practice of using more than one brand name together to represent a single product, service, or program. When done effectively, co-branding provides a way for divisions or organizations that fall under one name to join forces so that their outreach efforts work in harmony. However, partner brands should not compete with each other. For example, only one tagline should be used—never more than that—otherwise you begin to clutter your own message. It is best to make co-branding decisions on a case-by-case basis.

What can co-branding include?

Co-branding might include using the SNAP logo along with another logo or incorporating SNAP messaging in a brochure your organization is developing. For example, MyPyramid and SNAP nutrition education (SNAP-Ed) have co-branded with SNAP. Please refer to the [logo guidelines](#) for more guidance.



Did You Know?

FNS encourages States to conduct local outreach efforts. State agencies can receive reimbursement for approximately 50 percent of their administrative costs for outreach efforts. In addition, community and faith-based organizations may serve as contractors under [State outreach plans](#). FNS also offers a number of resources to help people on a tight budget eat healthy, such as [recipes](#) that use low-cost but healthy ingredients and nutrition education courses or [materials](#).

Creative Ways To Promote SNAP

1. Drop ready-to-use content (known as matte copy) into an e-newsletter or email.
2. Pitch the matte article to your local community newspaper or local blogger.
3. Use standard content to develop fliers and place them at grocery stores, food banks, health clinics, libraries, community centers, churches, and other places that serve low-income populations.
4. Use the SNAP logo as a Web button on your organization's Web site.
5. Pitch the PSAs and radionovelas to appropriate media outlets.

Communication Tools

FNS has created free materials that are available to community partners and States, should you wish to brand your program with the SNAP name, or co-brand your program with elements of the SNAP brand. Following are a list of these materials, including links to each one.

- **Visual with tagline.** To request an electronic version of the SNAP logo and tagline, please email SNAPHQ-web@fns.usda.gov with the subject line SNAP Logo Request. Carefully follow logo guidelines. The logo comes in multiple formats, in color, and in black and white. In your email request, please specify:
 - the logo format you want (e.g., high resolution, low resolution, or .eps file)
 - what color logo you want (e.g., black and white or color)
 - desired logo language (e.g., English or Spanish)
 - how you plan to use the logo.
- **Core message platform.** You may want to use one or more of the official SNAP messages. By using the same messaging language as FNS, you are helping to build a consistent, well-recognized brand across the country.
- **Avery labels.** FNS provides a template for standard Avery 5163 labels or equivalent with a notice about the change to SNAP. Print these [labels](#) and add them to your existing materials. An informational notice about the new name is also provided with all orders for outreach materials.
- **Newsletter article and paragraph.** FNS has developed a [newsletter article](#). You may choose to use some or all of the content from this article and add it to your own in-house newsletters. Similarly, this [standard paragraph](#) can be useful content for products such as fliers, letters, and reports you may develop in order to raise awareness about SNAP.
- **Public service announcements (PSAs).** FNS has updated the [television](#) and [radio public service announcements](#) in English and Spanish to include the new SNAP name and tagline. For detailed guidance on how to pitch PSAs to television and radio outlets, refer to the [PSA chapter](#) of the Community Outreach Toolkit.
- **Spanish Radionovelas.** For low-income, eligible Spanish-speaking audiences, FNS developed a [radionovela series](#) that includes ten 2-minute episodes that promote the nutrition benefits of SNAP and provide information about who are eligible and how they can apply.

Communication Channels: How to Get the Word Out



Communication Channels

Media Outreach

An overview of how to conduct effective media outreach, including step-by-step advice on how to identify and target your audience, reach out to the media, and evaluate your results.

Media Relations (Traditional and Online)

Puts the media relations skills introduced in the previous media section to use by providing dos and don'ts for interviews as well as sample press releases, media alerts, proclamations, and other helpful tools. In addition, this chapter provides a tutorial on how to write an optimized press release and distribute it online.

Social Media

Social media has expanded the way you can do outreach to your community. Learn about helpful resources and how to develop a social media strategy that works with the resources you have.

Partnerships

Step-by-step instructions and examples on how to maximize outreach efforts by developing partnerships, including suggestions for different types of partners, activities for potential outreach and ideas to gain community involvement.

Media Events

Provides guidance on what type of news constitutes an event and gives suggestions on how to plan an outreach event or press conference, including event ideas, and what to do before, during, and after the event.

Paid Advertising

The overall goal of an advertising strategy is to reach your audience and change behavior or attitudes. This chapter will provide the principal steps to reach that goal.

Public Service Announcements

Gives an overview of what public service announcements (PSA) are versus advertisements, and provides tips and hints about how to place a PSA.

Promising Practices

An overview of Promising Practices with real life examples. Provides a system to submit your agency's lessons learned, what you tried, what worked and what didn't.

Media Outreach

Why media outreach?

One of the most efficient and cost-effective ways to inform members of the community about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is through local television, radio, and newspapers.

What is media outreach?

Media outreach takes many forms — from a simple call to a reporter to suggest a story, to a formal press release or an organized event. All can be effective. Match your media efforts to what works best in your community.

Why would the media be interested in covering SNAP issues?

There are many compelling sides to the SNAP story. It is about the strength of a local community working together to help those who are less fortunate. It is about people facing challenges and doing what is right for themselves and their families. It has all the elements of an interesting story that local media want to cover. Your local media have both a community responsibility and a business interest in providing readers and viewers with valuable information.

What does media outreach involve?

Media outreach consists of the following seven steps:

1. **SELECT** a target audience.
2. **DEVELOP** a media list.
3. **BRAINSTORM** story ideas.
4. **PREPARE** materials and information.
5. **IDENTIFY** spokespeople.
6. **CONTACT** the media.
7. **EVALUATE** your efforts.

You may not have the time or resources to follow every step. The important thing is to keep the media informed about what you are doing so they can get the word out to eligible people in your community that SNAP benefits are available to them.



Tips & Tools

Placing stories in your local community's print and broadcast media can lead to bigger things. Frequently, statewide and national media outlets get story ideas from coverage at the local level. Do not be surprised if a story about SNAP outreach in your community is picked up by one of the major networks! Recently, a story about SNAP participation in local media outlets in Pennsylvania and Texas caught the eye of National Public Radio and led to an airing of a positive story about SNAP.

How will this toolkit help me with media outreach?

This section of the toolkit elaborates on each of the seven steps. It also provides information on media outreach tactics that require a little more effort, such as media events and getting into the media's editorial section. Regardless of how elaborate your effort is, this section will help you to work more effectively with the press and garner positive media coverage of hunger, nutrition issues, and SNAP.

Understanding that you may be working with limited staff resources, this section of the toolkit also includes tips and template materials to use when you contact the media.

Step 1 Select a Target Audience

Select your audience(s). Determine whom you are trying to reach before you begin your media outreach. Generally, you are trying to reach people who are eligible for SNAP benefits but not receiving them. Specific examples include:

- People 60 years of age or older
- Children
- Families
- Working poor
- Immigrants

National research shows that the most underserved and hardest-to-reach populations tend to be seniors, immigrants, and the working poor.

The audience for your community may vary. Talk to people in your local SNAP office to see whom they are trying to reach. Do your own research on underserved populations and the best methods to reach your selected audience(s). For more on this, see the [Resources](#) section of this toolkit.

Goals

Before you begin your outreach, establish some simple goals for your effort. Examples include:

- Educating people about the nutrition
- Increasing the number of calls to the local, State, or national toll-free number
- Promoting the EBT card
- Promoting extended hours for SNAP application certification interviews

Step 2 Develop A Media List

Determine the best channels for reaching your target audience by researching the answers to questions listed to the right. Then begin to create a media list, which is a list of local news media organizations and their contact information.

Check with your partner organizations to see if they already have a list that they are willing to share.



Know your Audience

Does your target audience:

- Listen to certain radio stations?
- Watch particular TV channels?
- Read local community papers or daily newspapers?

Pointers to Develop a Media List

- Check the local phone book for listings of television and radio stations, local daily and weekly newspapers, and magazines.
- Use the U.S. Newspaper List Web site at www.usnpl.com.
- Check the local library for media reference books, such as the Bacon's Media Yellow Book or the News Media Yellow Book.
- Check newspaper and television Web sites. Search their online archives to find names of reporters who have covered stories on SNAP, hunger, poverty, or nutrition in the past. Review the articles previously written or stories broadcast by the reporter to get a feel for her or his style and areas of interest.
- Ask your clients about their preferred local media sources.
- Add reporters' names to your list when you read a story or meet a reporter working on a story about hunger or community groups.
- Add the local offices or bureaus of national media organizations. These are typically located in State capitals or large cities. Wire services like the Associated Press (AP), Reuters, and the Scripps Howard News Service provide articles to local newspapers. Large radio and television networks also distribute stories to local affiliates. A listing of these is provided at the end of this section.

As you build your media list, add the names and contact information (phone, e-mail, fax, address) for specific individuals within each organization.

These individuals may include reporters, editors, and/or producers.

By appealing to specific individuals, you are more likely to get a response.

Double-check to make sure your contact names are up-to-date. Call the main number of the newspaper or station and ask the operator for assistance.

On your list, also make note of publication deadlines so you can contact editors and reporters well in advance of when you hope to actually see your story in print.

Choosing the Most Appropriate Contact

There are a number of individuals within a news organization who shape what is printed or broadcast. People to include on your media list are:

Appropriate Contacts

<i>Newspaper</i>	<i>TV</i>	<i>Radio</i>
<p>Reporters who cover health, social, and family issues</p> <p>Writers for the calendar or community events page</p> <p>Community columnists</p> <p>Editorial page editors</p> <p>Assignment editors who direct reporters or photographers to cover events</p>	<p>Reporters/on-air personalities</p> <p>Planning/assignment editors</p> <p>News broadcast producers</p> <p>Producers of morning shows or community programs</p>	<p>News directors</p> <p>Assignment editors</p> <p>Public affairs show hosts and producers</p> <p>On-air personalities or commentators</p>

Keep in mind that each media outlet may have a separate staff that writes for its Web site, and remember to include smaller media outlets, such as local cable access TV stations, community newspapers, and local parenting magazines and tabloids.

Step 3 Brainstorm Story Ideas

Although much of the news covered on TV or in the newspaper is unanticipated, you can sometimes generate interest by calling the media with a compelling story.

What makes your story newsworthy?

Consider the aspects of a news story that kept you engaged and interested. Provide local statistics and stories and offer the reporter an interesting angle.

What are some examples of newsworthy stories?

- Launch of a new program.
- Start of a new outreach effort for a specific audience like seniors, immigrants such as Hispanics, or working poor.
- Information about an organization or a community leader who has recently shown interest in issues such as nutrition or SNAP benefits.
- Community happenings that tie into SNAP issues, such as a factory closing or a new community partnership.

Five Components of a Newsworthy Story

TIMING

The word news means exactly what it says: things that are new. In this electronic age, people are used to receiving immediate news updates. If it happened today, it's news. If the same thing happened last week, it's no longer interesting. Think ahead to upcoming actions, events, holiday or seasonal stories, and volunteer appreciation stories — and plan your media outreach in advance so reporters can get the story while it is still news.

SIGNIFICANCE

The number of people affected by a story is important. If a significant number of people in your community are eligible for SNAP, yet are not tapping into the benefits, this will be considered newsworthy.

PROXIMITY

The closer the story hits to home, the more newsworthy it is.

PROMINENCE

Famous people get more coverage simply because they are famous. But celebrities do not have to come from Hollywood — they can be local politicians, prominent business owners, hometown sports heroes, or key community leaders.

HUMAN INTEREST

Human interest stories appeal to the readers' emotions. Talking about the benefits of SNAP through a first-person account is a good way to personalize what readers or viewers might otherwise think is merely a government program that has no relevancy to their lives.

Step 4 Prepare Materials

Once you have your story idea, get ready to present it to your local media.

How do I prepare my story?

Start by preparing any new materials and collecting background information. You might wish to check with your local SNAP office to see whether they have information you can use that is specific to your community.

In some cases, you might not need to develop any media materials. You may simply call or e-mail a reporter with your pitch (see [Step 6](#)).

If your story idea is time-sensitive or about a piece of breaking news, develop a [press release](#).

Sample media materials are provided in the [Media Relations](#) section.

Examples of Media Materials That Need to Be Prepared

PRESS RELEASE A 1–2 page document with information about your news. Press releases should be issued only for timely and significant happenings.

MEDIA ADVISORY A 1-page document that lists enough information to pique a reporter's interest without giving away the whole story. Usually, these are sent out before media events (see [Media Events](#) section).

PITCH LETTER A brief letter that presents your story idea.

FACT SHEET A document with statistical information about your news.

BIOGRAPHIES Background information about your spokespeople.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) Information about SNAP benefits, hunger, nutrition issues, and so forth, including such information as locations of local SNAP offices, the local toll-free number, and extended office hours or online applications.

GRAPHICS Charts on local enrollment trends, participation, or numbers of people who are eligible, but not participating.

Step 5 Identify Spokespersons

Official Spokespeople

Identify people whom the media can interview about the story. These may be local health experts, nutritionists, grocers, or human services providers. Be sure you have the full name, title, and contact information of these individuals readily available. Be sure that your spokespeople are approved by their organizations to speak to the media, and that they:

- Know the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP);
- Are available to appear on television or radio, and be interviewed by the print press;
- Are comfortable speaking to media;
- Are able to clearly communicate the point you want to get across;
- Can respond effectively to questions; and
- Will be considered credible, trustworthy sources of information by viewers or readers.

Testimonials

To add a human interest angle to the story, try to find people in your community who would be willing to share their stories with the media and talk about how SNAP benefits helped them get back on their feet. Speak to your partners to see if they can help identify someone like this.

Once someone has been selected, make sure the person is comfortable telling his or her story and has a positive experience to share. You will also need to confirm with the media outlet whether or not they have to use the true identity of the person giving the testimonial. A SNAP recipient may be uncomfortable using his or her name; some individuals might want to use an alias and others might want to just use their first name.

Step 6 Contact The Media

What are some helpful tips on contacting reporters?

- **Select the most appropriate reporters for your specific story.**
Do not bombard reporters with story ideas that are not relevant to the reporter's beat or specialty. For example, if you are pitching a story about the economic benefits of SNAP, contact the reporter on your media list who covers the local economy.
- **Find out how reporters like to be contacted and respect their time.**
Ask if a reporter prefers phone calls, e-mail, or news the old-fashioned way — by U.S. mail. Reporters may keep odd hours and juggle several assignments at once. Be respectful of their schedules and how they like to receive information. If you need to send out a press release or media advisory to a mass list rather than individual names, be sure to put e-mail addresses in the blind copy (bcc:) field to avoid sharing e-mail addresses with all the other recipients.
- **Review your talking points before you call reporters.**
Have your ideas ready (see [Media Relations section](#) for a pitch script sample) since most reporters are extremely busy and will give you only a minute or so to make your case before deciding if they are interested.
- **Make sure your e-mail subject line is descriptive but concise.**
Include a short (about two paragraphs), catchy pitch along with your contact information. Make the reporter's job as easy as possible by providing the most important information in the first paragraph. Include a link to the SNAP Web page (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/Default.htm>), as a reporter will often visit the Web site for insight before calling back.
- **Avoid using all caps or excessive punctuation.**
Reporters avoid anything that looks like unsolicited e-mail or "spam." Avoid using attachments when contacting a reporter for the first time, as he or she may suspect the attachment of containing a computer virus. Copy and paste relevant text into the body of the e-mail.
- **Introduce yourself fully on phone calls.**
Reference previous conversations, if applicable, to jog their memory as to who you are and why you're calling. Ask whether it is a good time to talk. If they cannot talk, offer to call back later at their convenience. If they have time to talk, get to your point quickly and gauge their level of interest based on the response. If they are not interested, they will let you know.
- **Be reliable.**
Nothing will squelch a media relationship faster than a promise you cannot deliver. Do your best to get reporters what they need in advance of their deadlines. However, if you won't be able to come through, let them know as early as possible.



Reporters' Deadlines

PRINT

Call a newsroom between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., when reporters are most likely not in planning meetings or working against a 5 p.m. deadline.

TELEVISION

Call assignment or planning editors after 10 a.m. and before 3 p.m., but not in the hour or so before a noon newscast. It's best to call the assignment desk after the morning planning meeting, which usually ends between 9:30 and 10 a.m.

RADIO

Call early, around 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. After that, staff often have planning meetings, but you can start calling again after 10 a.m. News directors, reporters, and producers are often gone by the afternoon.

- **Follow up.**

Although some reporters will provide coverage after one phone interview, that is frequently not enough. It is important to be in front of reporters on a consistent basis with compelling information that demonstrates what you are pitching is viable, credible, and worthy of coverage. Be sure to offer reporters the additional elements they would need to round out their stories — photos, Web site information, toll-free numbers, listing of local SNAP offices, and additional resources, if necessary.

- **Know when to keep at it and when to let go.**

No matter how passionate you are about a story, some reporters will never buy in. A good way to circumvent a quick “no” is to pitch by phone rather than email (unless that is a reporter’s preference). This will get you better results and allow you to build the relationships you need to ensure consistent success. When using the phone, leave one message only, and then continue to call at different times of the day until you are able to speak to the reporter. Once you have your content on the line, it is much easier to make your case, as you can engage a reporter in a conversation and handle questions or objections as they arise.

Timing Your Outreach

Monthly publications are typically magazines, often designed to appeal to a particular segment of the community. They are not as focused on time-sensitive news events, and are therefore good channels for communicating “big picture” stories and features. Stories created for monthlies must often be written 3 to 6 months prior to publication date.

Weeklies can come in a magazine or newspaper format, and often are distributed free at grocery stores or other popular community locations. Plan on contacting weeklies 2 to 6 weeks before you hope to see your story in print.

Dailies are defined as local newspapers that focus on breaking news, although they are also good outlets for in-depth features. For feature stories, plan on contacting dailies 2 to 3 weeks before you hope to see your story in print. For time sensitive news stories, contact approximately 1 week out.

Broadcast outlets include television and radio. Broadcast news tends to provide live coverage of news events, and relies on images or audio sound bites to tell the story. Broadcast outlets can also be interested in longer stories, particularly for morning or community shows. For feature-length stories, contact the producer of the segment you are pitching 2 to 3 weeks before you hope to see your story on the air. For more time-sensitive news stories contact approximately 1 week out.

Step 7 Evaluate

Reviewing and analyzing your media outreach allows you to determine whether you reached your goals and what did and didn't work. It also gives you an opportunity to share your success. The end result need not be an exhaustive report, just some information to help you track your efforts.

How can I chart media outreach efforts?

- Set goals before you begin so that you have something to measure (for example, place one newspaper article or TV story about SNAP benefits, promote the local toll-free number, or increase inquiries about SNAP by 10 percent).
- Establish a starting point (known as a baseline), if possible. Take note of how many calls you are getting about SNAP benefits, or how much media coverage you are receiving now. If you do this, you can quantify improvements and increases.
- Begin your analysis as soon as possible after your media push or event so that everything is fresh in your mind.
- Use numbers to paint your success story: "There was a 50-percent increase in media coverage compared to last year," or, "After our appearance on the local radio show, calls about SNAP benefits increased by 20 percent."
- Use anecdotal evidence to show your success: "Many clients remarked that they didn't think they would be eligible for SNAP benefits until they saw the TV story." In addition, use quotes from clients that support your success: "I was surprised to learn that I might still qualify for SNAP benefits even though I have a job."
- Include information on the reach of a media outlet: "An article ran in the Anytown News, which has a circulation of 80,000." This information is usually available on the media outlet's Web site.
- Look at what is said in the media coverage you receive to determine whether you communicated your key points. If you wanted to convey that every accommodation is being made to help elderly people apply for benefits, did that come across in your story?
- Make copies of the newspaper articles that include your contributions. Make sure they are well presented. Keep a file of media coverage that you can easily access.
- Share articles with partners, or incorporate articles in a presentation folder for potential partners.

How do I monitor for media coverage?

Following are some quick and easy ways to monitor coverage on a shoestring budget:

- Check the outlet's Web site. Most searches are free for any time up to a week or month.
- If you submitted an announcement to a newsletter or bulletin, ask about distribution numbers, so you get a rough estimate of how many people read your message.
- If you know a TV story will air at a certain time, record the segment.
- To find out the circulation or audience numbers for newspapers and TV, check the outlet's Web site. If you need to call to ask for this information, the advertising department will usually give it to you.

What are some additional media tracking resources?

NewzGroup Provides comprehensive statewide press clipping services of all daily and weekly newspapers in Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, South Carolina, Texas, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

<http://www.newzgroup.com/>

Lexis-Nexis This is probably the most comprehensive online database of full-text news and magazine articles, but it is also among the most expensive of the available services.

www.lexisnexis.com/

GoogleNews Google News is a free news site that aggregates headlines from news sources worldwide, groups similar stories together and displays them according to each reader's personalized interests. Users can set up their page to show the stories that best represent their interests and can also sign up to receive weekly, daily or as-it-happens email alerts.

<http://news.google.com/>

Clip & Copy Clip&Copy is a specialized online news alert and press clipping service covering a targeted set of news web sites, including leading wire services and hundreds of online newspapers, magazines and trade journals. Clip&Copy ensures that you are not infringing on copyrights as most articles contain instantly accessible rights to make copies, distribute and use for web site postings. Coverage ranges from free to \$9.95/month.

<http://www.clipandcopy.com/index.asp>

Newspaper Clips Monitors thousands of online local, national and worldwide publications including newspapers, TV stations, radio stations, online sites, news wires, press releases, and blogs. Basic coverage starts at \$84.95/month.

<http://www.newspaperclips.com/npcapp/default.aspx>

Lone Buffalo Offers both a daily clipsheet as well as ad hoc services for real time monitoring for certain issues or programs. The service looks a several news sources and delivers the daily and breaking news reports via email.

<http://www.lonebuffalo.com/index.html>



Keeping a Record of Media Coverage

- Locate either an online or print copy of the story.
- Cut out or print off the title of the publication (also known as the flag, logotype, or masthead).
- Make sure the date and byline (reporter's name) are included on the article. If one or the other is not included on the printed version, type the date and byline (sometimes the byline will be "Staff" or "Reuters") on a separate piece of paper; cut it out.
- Lay the components out on a white, blank piece of paper in the following order: flag, byline, date, and content.
- Tape the components neatly onto your blank paper; make sure the edges are not folded.
- Photocopy your laid out news article. Consider making two copies (one for a report and one for reference.)

10 Tips For Conducting Effective Media Outreach

- Tip 1 Identify who you want to reach.**
Who is your target audience? Do you want to reach all eligible nonparticipants, or do you want to focus on a specific audience, such as seniors or the Latino community?
- Tip 2 Determine the best way to reach them.**
Does your target audience read community newspapers?
Do they watch TV? What time of day are they watching TV?
Do they listen to the radio? Make a list of the relevant media outlets and reporters.
- Tip 3 Set simple, but measurable goals.**
What do you want to achieve through media outreach? For example, do you want to increase inquiries to the toll-free number, inform people about the nutrition benefits of SNAP?
- Tip 4 Think about the best timing for your story.**
Does your news need to be released immediately? Would it be better to wait for a more opportune time such as after the holidays when people are struggling to make ends meet?
- Tip 5 Think about what you want to say.**
Formulate the message that you want to communicate to your target audience, e.g., promote toll-free number, extended office hours, the nutrition benefits of SNAP.
- Tip 6 Think about ways to make your story interesting.**
Can you get real-life testimonials from SNAP participants?
Could a statewide story be tied into your pitch?
- Tip 7 Determine how you are going to communicate your message.**
Will you simply call the reporter and provide background information? Do you need to put together a press release or host a press conference?
- Tip 8 Determine who is going to say it.**
Do you have people lined up that reporters can speak to, like a SNAP office director, a food bank supervisor, or a nutritionist?
- Tip 9 Be targeted in your media outreach.**
Your pitch will be more effective if you reach the right person. Spend some time reading, watching, and listening to the media outlets you will pitch and recent coverage by the reporter you will be contacting. How far in advance do you need to reach out? What time of day would work best? Do reporters prefer email or a phone call?
- Tip 10 Evaluate your results and share.**
Reviewing and analyzing your media outreach lets you know if you reached your goals and what did and did not work. Share your success with others!

Media Relations

The previous sections of this toolkit have mentioned a variety of tools you can use to conduct outreach for increasing participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This section provides the specific, practical information you need to put these tools to use:

- Interviews
- Pitch scripts and letters
- Media advisories
- Press releases
- Optimized press releases
- Proclamations
- Calendar listings

At the end of the chapter you will find templates and a list of glossary terms relevant to this chapter.

Tips For Successful Interviews

Following are interview tips that you or your organization's SNAP spokespeople can use.

Before The Interview

- Know the reporter, publication/program, interview format, and audience. Go online and look up recent articles written by the reporter and ask your colleagues if they know anything about the outlet or reporter.
- Know your goal for the interview. For instance, do you want to publicize a prescreening event? Let people know about your toll-free number?
- Know what you want to say. Review the talking points in the [Introduction](#) section.
- Develop 3-5 key talking points to ensure your message is related.
- Jot down likely questions and appropriate answers.

Telephone Interviews

- Buy preparation time by asking to call the reporter back if the deadline allows.
- Establish an "interview atmosphere" and mindset. Set yourself up in a quiet room with no distractions and have your talking points in front of you. Do not think it's any less formal because it is over the phone.
- Use notes.
- For radio, speak visually — use words to paint pictures. For instance: "The number of hungry people in Pleasantville could fill the football stadium three times over."

Television Interviews

- For men, a dark suit and blue shirt works best. For women, avoid solid black or white, and busy patterns. Bright colors are fine.
- Sit erect, but not stiff, and slightly forward in the chair.
- Resist the urge to shout into the microphone. Speak and gesture naturally.
- Talk to the reporter or interviewer, not the camera.
- Keep a pleasant expression; smile when appropriate.
- Hold your "interview attitude" from the moment you are lit until the interview is completely over and you are sure the camera is off.

Interview Do's

- Asked about a problem? Talk about a solution. For examples, see the Q&A document in the Introduction section.
- Answer the question you wish they had asked. “Bridge” to a related point you want to make. For example:
Q: Why are so many people going hungry?
 A: It's a complicated issue, but the important thing is that people can get the nutrition support they need through SNAP benefits.
- Speak in headlines. Speak in short, succinct statements that will make good quotes. Offer a conclusion first, briefly and directly, and back it with facts or proof points. For example:
 “SNAP has made big changes recently that make it easier to find out about the program. You can call 1-800-221-5689 to learn more about benefits and how to apply.”
- Speak clearly. Avoid jargon and bureaucratese.
- Be engaging, likable.
- Even if a reporter uses a negative statement or slurs, frame your reply as a positive statement.

Interview Don'ts

- Do not fake your expertise. If you do not have the answer to a question, assure the reporter you will find and provide the needed facts in a timely manner (please provide an approximate time to expect the call), or offer to assist the reporter in finding another source.
- Do not overlap the interviewer's question; begin your answer when the reporter is finished.
- Do not be provoked. Keep cool.
- Do not lie to a reporter. If you are uncomfortable responding to a particular question, simply say that you have “no comment.” However, if you can, refer them to another appropriate source for the information or let them know you will find out for them.
- Do not over-answer. Short answers are better than long.
- Do not let false charges, facts, or figures offered by a reporter stand uncorrected, for example:
Q: Why would someone go to the trouble of applying for SNAP if the benefits are only \$10 a month?
 A: On average, monthly benefits vary from \$86 per person to almost \$200 per household. This additional support will help low-income households purchase nutritious foods necessary for a healthy diet.
- Do not fall victim to hypothetical situations and “A or B” dilemmas.

Media Pitch Script

What is a pitch script?

A pitch script is an outline of the key points you need to cover during a phone conversation with a reporter or assignment editor. You can use this pitch script to talk to a reporter before or after sending them a media advisory about an upcoming event.

How much time will I have to make my pitch?

Often you only have 30 - 90 seconds to make your pitch, so you must use them wisely. Practice your pitch aloud once or twice before calling.

Should I read from my script?

No, do not read directly from the script as you talk. The script is to be used as a guide.

Where can I find SNAP participation data to use in my pitch?

You can find updated participation data on the FNS Web site at www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/SNAP/participation.htm.

What if the reporter cannot attend?

If the reporter cannot attend, ask if you can send a photograph or perhaps arrange a phone interview with one of your spokespeople afterwards.

Pitch Script Template

Following are two examples of pitch scripts. The ineffective script does not provide the reporter with enough details to cover the event and does not present a case. The effective script politely asks if the reporter has time to talk and efficiently outlines pertinent event information.

Effective:

"Hello, my name is XX and I am calling from the Hunger Organization. Is this a good time?" [Or, "Do you have a minute?" If not, ask when you can call back.]

"Because XX low-income elderly people in [NAME OF STATE/TOWN/CITY] are living on the edge of hunger, Hunger Organization is kicking off a 'Benefit Bus' tour on Monday to help the older population in [NAME OF STATE/TOWN/CITY] access SNAP benefits without the bother of finding transportation to a local SNAP office.

"This bus tour will span X days and X locations. [Have additional details handy, such as a media advisory, in case you are asked questions about the event.] SNAP outreach coordinators will be on hand to provide a checklist of all necessary paperwork needed to apply, and to conduct prescreenings for benefit eligibility.

"I hope you'll agree that this is something you or your station/paper would be interested in covering. May I fax or e-mail you a media advisory? [Or, I have faxed/e-mailed you a media advisory about this event to provide you with additional information.]" "If you have any questions about the event or our program, or need to reach us, my name is XX and my number is XXX-XXXX." [For voicemail, repeat name and number.]

Ineffective:

"Hi! I just wanted to tell you that Hunger Organization will be holding an event on Monday. The antihunger group works with members of the community to provide SNAP benefits and..."

Pitch Letter

What is a pitch and what are some examples of a pitch?

A pitch is contact with a journalist or editor to introduce story ideas or other salient information. “Pitching” most often refers to media outreach efforts to obtain coverage; however, outreach efforts to place PSAs or secure partnerships are also forms of pitches.

When to Use a Pitch Letter

A pitch letter makes the case for covering a specific story, especially a story that is “evergreen” or is not tied to a specific event and can be written at any time.

The Importance of a Pitch Letter

More than a phone call, the pitch letter allows you to outline what you are doing and why it is valuable. A good pitch letter has staying power. If it doesn’t generate a story today, it may tomorrow.

The Format of a Pitch Letter

A pitch letter can be used in a variety of formats — mail, fax, email. If you choose to send a pitch letter via mail, put it on your letterhead. The points outlined in the “Developing and Selling the Story” section of this toolkit will also come in handy as you create your pitch letter.

A template of a pitch letter is included at the end of this chapter.

Pitch Letter Template

Dear [NAME OF REPORTER],

Have you ever had to decide whether to buy medicine for your sick child or buy food? Have you ever had to choose between paying the heating bill and having enough food for dinner? Every day, thousands of low-income people in [NAME OF STATE/TOWN/CITY] grapple with issues like these. But they don't have to.

There are XX people living on the edge of hunger in [NAME OF STATE/TOWN/CITY]. SNAP helps low-income Americans purchase nutritious, healthy food. However, only half of those eligible to receive SNAP benefits are currently enrolled.

[ORGANIZATION NAME] is kicking off a SNAP outreach effort in [NAME OF STATE/TOWN/CITY] by *[Describe the activity you would like the media to report on, such as hosting a health fair or prescreening event, volunteering, distributing informational fliers, promoting events, etc., And be sure to use language to get their attention]*. The goal of this outreach effort is to ensure that everyone who is eligible for SNAP knows about it and is able to access benefits.

SNAP is a win-win for low-income families and individuals, as well as for the local economy. By helping them defray the costs of groceries, SNAP benefits allow recipients to purchase more healthy and nutritious food. These benefits also help local retailers and the local community by bringing Federal dollars into the area.

Given some of your recent stories, I thought you would be interested in learning more about our community outreach effort, and I look forward to speaking with you in further detail. I can be reached at (XXX) XXX-XXXX to answer any questions you may have or provide you with background information.

Best regards,

[YOUR NAME]

[TITLE]

[CONTACT INFORMATION]

Media Advisories

What is a media advisory?

A media advisory is a one-page document loaded with information about the who, what, when and where of your planned event — without giving away the entire story.

What goes out first, the media advisory or the press release?

The media advisory is sent in advance of a press release.

What is the goal of a media advisory?

The goal is to get your event on the media's calendars and planning books. Using your organization's letterhead, write your advisory in a way that will interest the press, without giving away so many details that they get the full story without having to attend the event.

How do I write a media advisory?

As demonstrated in the template below, begin with a headline that informs the media that something important or “newsworthy” is happening, followed by a secondary heading with additional facts.

When should I distribute the media advisory?

See the [Media Outreach](#) section for more information on when to distribute a media advisory.

What Type of Information Should I Include in the Advisory?

- **WHAT** As in a press release, the first sentence should describe the purpose or “what” of your event in a uniquely newsworthy way. Like your pitch, the media advisory should have a “hook” or angle to get the attention of the media.
- **WHEN** The “when” section outlines the specific date and time of the event.
- **WHO** The “who” section lists event attendees in order of prestige — for example, a State official would be featured before a local official.
- **WHERE** The “where” states the exact address of the event, and includes directions and parking information if necessary.
- **WHY** The “why” section provides background information for the media, including relevant statistics and a brief description of your organization. This section should also reference other resources, if available, such as a Web site, video clips or radio sound bites.

Media Advisory Template

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: [NAME OF DESIGNATED MEDIA CONTACT]
 [(AREA CODE) PHONE #]
 [CELL# or E-MAIL]

[TITLE OF STORY]

[Subhead to identify story line]

WHAT: [Explain the media event. Ex: What income does a family in (local area) need to meet basic needs? What types of subsidies and supports are in place to help (local area) families make ends meet? What is being done to help lift the earnings of low-income working families in (local area)?

These are the kinds of questions that will be answered at a briefing to release a report on the cost of living in (local or State name) and to kick off a campaign to help local area) families on their path to economic security.))

[BULLET LIST OF KEY POINTS]

WHEN: [DATE & TIME]

WHERE: [NAME OF ORGANIZATION]
 [STREET ADDRESS]
 [CITY, STATE]
 [PHONE]

WHO: [NAME, TITLE & ORGANIZATION]
 [NAME, TITLE & ORGANIZATION]
 [NAME, TITLE & ORGANIZATION]
 [NAME, TITLE & ORGANIZATION]

Sponsors of the event are: [LIST ORGANIZATIONAL OR PRIVATE SPONSORS]

How to Write a Press Release

- Tip 1 THE HEADLINE** The headline of your press release should be as dramatic as possible without sounding exaggerated. Will your program affect the community in a big way? Think about what will grab the attention of a news reporter. Your headline will tell the news.
- Tip 2 WRITING STYLE** The upside-down pyramid is a standard style of news writing. The broad base at the top of the pyramid represents the most newsworthy information in the story, and the narrow tip at the bottom represents the least newsworthy information in the story. This enables the story to be shortened by cutting from the bottom without losing the most important details. Similarly, when you write a press release in the upside-down pyramid format, you put the most newsworthy information at the beginning and the least newsworthy information at the end.
- Tip 3 PARAGRAPH ONE** The first paragraph states the news or announcement and includes supporting information. Make sure you have addressed the who, what, when, where, and why of the story.
- Tip 4 PARAGRAPH TWO** A quote often starts the second paragraph and delivers a major message point of your effort. It can state an opinion and add a human element to the story. Generally, the person writing the release will draft a quote to effectively communicate the point.
- Tip 5 USE OF QUOTES** Quotes must be approved by the person to whom the quote is attributed. Quotes are often adjusted to respond to that person's concerns, tone, and style. Be sure to make the quotes conversational and brief; this increases their chances of being picked up and repeated. You should not quote more than two people. Quoting from too many sources causes confusion.
- Tip 6 PARAGRAPH THREE** This paragraph contains more information on the event or announcement. You could include interesting and relevant facts that are a part of your main message. You can amplify your message with another quote either from the same spokesperson or from a different source. Be sure the quotes are conversational and brief.
- Tip 7 LAST PARAGRAPH** This paragraph should tell the public what you want them to know about your organization. For example, how long it has been in the community and/or how people can contact you.
- Tip 8 LOCAL OR REGIONAL MEDIA** You will be writing for local or regional media, so your press release should provide details about how the news affects your community. Your local news outlets will be more interested in a story whose impact is felt locally. That said, you should also provide some national context — like information about SNAP benefits, trends, and national studies.

How to Write a Press Release

- Tip 9 ACRONYMS, JARGON, AND TECHNICAL LANGUAGE** Do not use acronyms, jargon or highly technical language in your press release.
- Tip 10 LENGTH OF PRESS RELEASE** Your press release should be to-the-point and a maximum of one to two pages. Few reporters will read beyond a second page. A press release is not the right forum to issue thank-you's and acknowledgements.
- Tip 11 PROOFREAD YOUR RELEASE** Always make time to review and edit your release. Correct all spelling and typographical errors. Have someone unfamiliar with the program look over the release to see if the messages are clear to them.
- Tip 12 LETTERHEAD** Print the release on your organization's letterhead so that it looks official.

Press Release Layout Suggestions

1. **CONTACT INFORMATION** Always include up-to-date contact information on your press release in the upper right-hand corner. The contacts you list should be easily accessible; you may wish to include more than one person. Because reporters often work on tight deadlines and may need to reach your contact immediately, consider including a cell phone number on your release.
2. **PARAGRAPH ONE** The first paragraph of your press release should include the city from which you are releasing the information and the date.
3. **SPACING** To ensure ease of reading, use at least a space and a half or double space between lines. Make sure you leave enough margin space, at least 3/4 ", for reporters to make their own notes.
4. **FORMAT** If your press release is more than a page, you should write "- more -" at the bottom of the page to indicate that it continues. You should also write "Page Two" in the upper left-hand corner of the page so that reporters can follow the release easily. Finish the release by inserting "###" at the end. This indicates that there is no more copy.

An annotated template of a press release is included at the end of this chapter.

Press Release Template

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
[DATE]

CONTACT: **1**
[YOUR NAME OR APPROPRIATE CONTACT]
[(AREA CODE) PHONE #]
[CELL# or E-MAIL]

[HUNGER ORGANIZATION] AND [CITY GROCER] KICK OFF “FILL THE CART” CAMPAIGN

***Outreach Effort Underway to Educate [YOUR COMMUNITY] Low-Income Families and
Individuals about Nutrition and SNAP Purchase Power***

2 **[YOUR CITY, STATE, DATE]** – [HUNGER ORGANIZATION] and [CITY GROCER] kicked off the “Fill the Cart” campaign today – a major outreach initiative to increase enrollment in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Working together, the two will educate [YOUR COMMUNITY’S] low-income families and individuals about nutritious and healthy food which can be purchased using SNAP benefits. [CITY GROCER] has also developed a recipe book highlighting sample healthy menus and an easy-to-use shopping list featuring nutritious items that can be purchased using SNAP benefits. The recipe book will be distributed at local [CITY GROCER] stores, farmers markets and health fairs. *[Add specific details about outreach effort]*

“[INSERT QUOTE HERE],” said [YOUR ORGANIZATION’S] Executive Director, president or spokesperson.

3 SNAP is a win-win for the [CITY] community – for both residents and retailers. Funded with Federal dollars, each \$5 in new SNAP benefits generates almost twice that amount in economic activity for the community. For a household of four, the average benefit is about \$200 a month. Research shows that low-income households participating in SNAP have access to more food energy, protein, and an array of essential vitamins and minerals in their home food supply. *[Add other relevant information on the event of announcement – i.e. Interesting/relevant statistics, economic benefit, EBT card versus paper coupons.]*

“[INSERT SECOND QUOTE HERE],” said [SNAP office contact, partner, or another key community leader.]

[NAME OF ORGANIZATION] is community-based organization serving the [NAME OF AREA] community for 25 years. [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] raises awareness about the nutrition benefits of SNAP through outreach including prescreening events, cooking demonstrations and a toll-free information hotline. For more information about SNAP, and what you can do in [NAME OF CITY/TOWN] to help further [NAME OF ORGANIZATION]’s mission, call [PHONE NUMBER OF ORGANIZATION] or visit [YOUR Web site, if applicable].

4 ###

What is an optimized press release?

An optimized press release is similar to a traditional release. It contains news-worthy and buzz-worthy information that you want to convey to your audience. It includes a strong and catchy headline, a summary, and an introductory paragraph. Like a traditional press release, you can also include quotes and references.

Unlike a traditional release, optimized releases can include hyperlinks, images, and videos, and are often edited to include “keywords” to help search engines find and index the releases.

The purpose of this section is to teach you how to take your traditional press release and transform it into an optimized release and then distribute it online.



Tips & Tools

- Looking to get more information about any of these topics? Refer to the [Tutorial](#) section later in this chapter.
- If you need help with a specific word, check the [Glossary](#) at the end of this chapter.

DEFINITION

$$\text{Optimized Press Release} = \text{Traditional Press Release} + \text{Keyword Research} + \text{Hyperlinks} + \text{Online Distribution}$$

Why is it important to optimize releases and distribute them online?

The Internet is growing. More and more, people are getting their news online. Almost 40 percent of people get their news online on a regular basis, compared to 13 percent 10 years ago. That means that if you want people to find your news, you should make sure it is online.

Optimizing your release will help to make sure that people who are looking online for your news can find it.

How do I start?

In the following pages, we will discuss several basic steps you can take to optimize a press release. We also provide an example. Should you wish to explore these steps in more depth, we encourage you to read this information and then review the quick tutorial that follows, which will shed even more light for you on the subject of optimized press releases and what is entailed in order to perform each step.

How to Develop an Optimized Press Release

Step 1 Use Keyword Research

Think of keyword research as “the psychology of search.” When Internet users search for information using search engines, they are asking for specific information. Therefore, you want to use “key” language in your press release.

For instance, if you are writing about conjunctivitis, but everyone is searching online for “pink eye,” they may never find your information—even if it is exactly what they want.

FNS has developed some keywords that pertain to SNAP. They are available for you to use [here](#).

You may want to build on this work by doing your own research. Performing keyword research lets you learn the words and phrases that online searchers use most often to look for your subject matter. Visit the [Tutorial](#) section to learn how to conduct your own keyword research and to obtain a list of online tools you can use.

Step 2 Modify For Online Audience

After you compile key research terms used by your Internet audience, you can identify the ideal wording to use in your release. You should insert this word or phrase into your release as much as possible.

While you want to insert your one keyword or key phrase as often as possible, there are a few areas that are more important than others when optimizing a release. These are the areas that the search engine sees as more important and uses to determine what your release is about. The key areas are:

- Headline
- Summary or subhead
- First paragraph (or first 250 words)
- Hyperlinks (covered indepth later in this section)



Tips & Tools

You want to include your keyword or key phrase about 5 times for every 100 words — but in real terms that is very hard to do. It is always more important to make sure your release reads well.

Step 3 Insert Hyperlinks

Hyperlinks should be placed where you think your reader would want more information. Often, it makes sense to hyperlink the name of your organization to your Web site the first time your organization’s name appears in the release. Other than that, the placement is up to you. It is better to concentrate the bulk of your URLs towards the beginning of the release.

Internet users expect that you will include hyperlinks in your release, but you should also spell out the Web address of your main site, in case someone prints your release. One place you can include the full Web site address is at the end of your release or in your organization’s boilerplate.

Step 4 Select An Online Service

You will need to choose an online service to distribute your release. There are many online vendors that can distribute your release, with different features and different prices. Therefore, you should choose the service that fits your budget and also meets your distribution needs. Some services are much more expensive, but will distribute your release to traditional wire services and online channels, such as Yahoo! News. Other options are free, but do not distribute your release to anyone. Instead, these services rely on you to send the release URL to your media and other contacts.

Some Optimized Release Distribution Options

- PRWeb www.prweb.com
- MultiVu www.multivu.com
- EON eon.businesswire.com/portal/site/eon
- PitchEngine www.pitchengine.com
- MarketWire www.marketwire.com

For additional recommendations on how to evaluate the relative success of your release, please see the [Tutorial](#) section.



Tips & Tools

- Don't use too many URLs in one sentence or short paragraph — it can make your text difficult to read and be distracting.
- You should use no more than 1 hyperlink per 100 words of your release. So, if your release is 525 words long, you should include no more than 5 hyperlinks.

Step 5 Measure Your Success

Unlike traditional wire services, most online distribution services will not provide you with a pick-up or coverage report. However, many online distribution services will provide the number of people who read or download the release directly from their Web site.

For additional recommendations on how to evaluate the relative success of your release, please see the [Tutorial](#) section.

Optimizing A Release: Example

In this section, you can see how an actual traditional release was optimized and then distributed online. In this example certain vendors and products were used, but for your release some tools may be more applicable and appropriate than others.



The above example of a traditional release might look familiar to you. When you begin to work towards distributing an online release, the first step is to review your traditional release and identify the key subject areas. You should also compile a list of what you think people who are looking for this type of information would type into an Internet search engine.

For the above example, some of the key concepts and ideas were: food stamps, SNAP, USDA, FNS, food, nutrition, Farm Bill, food assistance, EBT, etc.

Conducting Keyword Research

Next, using an online keyword research tool (for this example Keyword Discovery is used), look up all the concepts you thought of in step one. Keep track of how the terms compare to each other. For instance, in the previous example, we found that “apply for food stamps” is used almost three times more often than “applying for food stamps.”

Your goal is to come up with one phrase or word that is the central subject matter of your release, and which is the most searched-for way of describing that subject. So, if the release were all about applying for food stamps, your key phrase would be “apply for food stamps.”

In what follows, you can see how often some terms are searched for compared to other terms. “Nutrition,” “USDA,” and “food stamps” are the top three.

Select	Query	Searches
<input type="checkbox"/>	nutrition	19,768
<input type="checkbox"/>	usda	11,145
<input type="checkbox"/>	food stamps	6,255
<input type="checkbox"/>	hunger	1,931
<input type="checkbox"/>	nutrition facts	1,554
<input type="checkbox"/>	food nutrition	1,410
<input type="checkbox"/>	diet nutrition	1,299
<input type="checkbox"/>	foodstamps	1,294
<input type="checkbox"/>	ebt	1,276
<input type="checkbox"/>	food stamp	654

“Nutrition” is searched for the most of all the terms. However, people who type “nutrition” into a search engine could be searching for a variety of things. Try typing “nutrition” into Google – the top results are nutritional guides filled with calorie information and healthy eating tips. It will not hurt to include the word “nutrition” in the release, but it should not be the main keyword, especially because “USDA” and “food stamps” are really much more relevant to this particular release.

Looking at the traditional release, you should find places in the key areas (headline, summary, and first paragraph) to insert these words. Remember, keeping your release readable and interesting is always the priority.

Insert Hyperlinks

We stressed earlier how important it is to include hyperlinks in a release. The next step is to decide where you want the hyperlink to go.

For the press release on the next page, the choices were fairly obvious. The release is about the name change of the Food Stamp Program to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), so you want to drive people to the landing page for that program. Secondly, we wanted to link to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service homepage so people can also learn more broadly about the available programs.

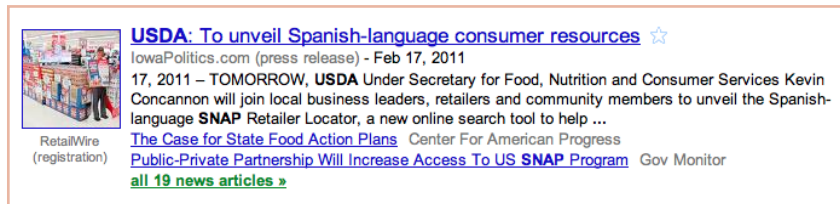
Ideally, you should insert your hyperlinks into the body of your press release and ensure that the text in the hyperlink includes some of your keywords. It is also a good idea to include hyperlinks early in your release both for the benefit of search engines and also so that people will see the links even if they do not scroll through your entire release.

Tips & Tools

- Spelling out acronyms is always a good idea. In this case, many people are not yet familiar with the new Federal Food Stamp Program name—the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The full name of SNAP also happens to include “Nutrition,” which is a very highly searched for word.
- In the case of SNAP, it is also helpful to use “food stamps” somewhere in your release because “food stamps” is still very much in people’s minds and is very likely to be searched for. Over time, as SNAP becomes more familiar to the public, this may change.
- In general, for online releases, your headline should be about 22 words, your summary or subhead should be about 2 sentences, and your release should be about 1,000 words. These lengths are ideal for search engines, and also reflect online consumers’ short attention span.

Add Assets and Tag Your Release

One of the most notable features of online optimized press releases is that they can include logos, images, attached files, and video. It is always a good idea to include at least one image or logo if you can—it will make your release stand out more in the search engine results.



Images displayed alongside news results on a search engine results page

In addition to making your release stand out more in search engine results, adding assets to your release increases the depth of your offering—you have turned your press release into a complete package.

Depending on the vendor you choose to use, you may also be given the option to add “tags” or a “list of keywords” to your release. These are mechanisms to help people find and share your release. Use words from your keyword research for these fields.

Review the Final Product and Distribute

Of course you always want to review a release before you distribute it—as it is better to be safe than sorry. With some online release vendors, you can update the version of the release that resides on the vendor's site, but you can't update what has already been distributed to the media or any of the service's subscribers.

Following is a screen shot of what the optimized version of the SNAP release looked like when it was distributed online.



Tutorial: Optimized Press Releases

What are some differences between the optimized and traditional press releases?

An optimized release is often shorter than a traditional release. The optimized release has been adapted for Internet use and is easier to find by search engines. The optimized releases are written to include key search words. These key search words are words used by your audiences.

An optimized release often includes video, images, and other documents such as research papers or presentations.

Lastly, an optimized release is typically distributed by online press release distribution services, rather than by you. These services specifically target online media channels, such as Google News, Yahoo! News, and other news outlets.

What are some benefits to using an optimized press release?

Benefits include your ability to:

- Distribute your news directly to consumers in addition to media
- Use hyperlinks that will drive people to your Web site
- Use video, photos, or logos
- Enable audiences to download materials
- Take advantage of tools such as “social bookmarking” and “tagging” to allow people to easily share your news with others
- Increase traffic (Internet visitors) to your Web site
- Drive your audience to a particular location on the Internet (a specific page, for example)
- Increase the online visibility and awareness of your organization or event
- Raise the visibility of your Web page on search engine results pages

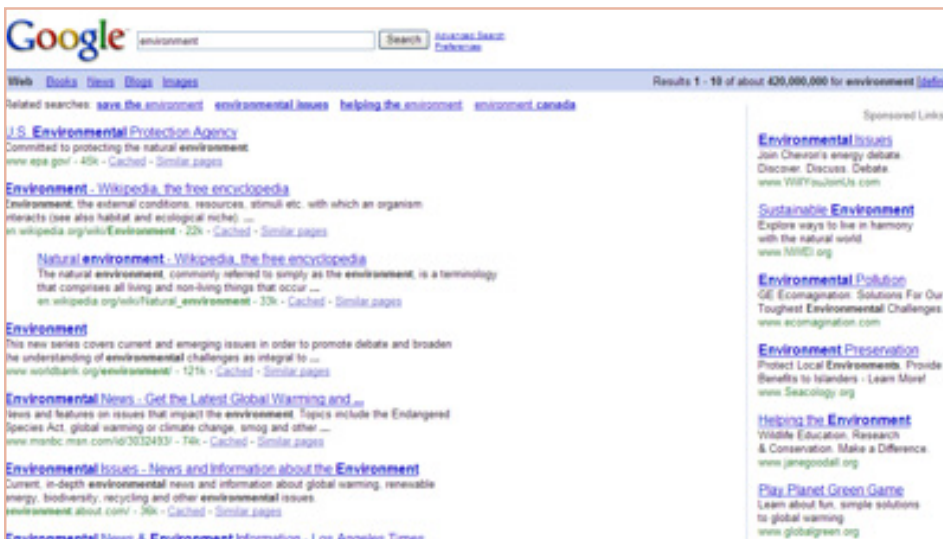
My traditional press releases already show up online, so why should I optimize a release?

People who are getting their news online use search engines. The majority of online searches are done through Google. There are other popular search engines as well, including Yahoo! and MSN.

Search engines are important because you want your news to be easily found and indexed. Search engine optimization (often referred to as “SEO”) is the process that helps organize the information on a Web page to make it most easily found and recorded by search engines. Optimizing your release for search engines will make sure your information is getting to the people who are searching for it.

When I search for something using a search engine, different results appear in different areas of the page. What are the different sections, and what do they mean?

You often see two types of results when you search for something using an Internet search engine like Google. One result is called “Paid Search” or “Sponsored Links.” These are often on the right side of the screen, but can also appear at the top or bottom. Regardless of where they appear, they will always be labeled as “Sponsored Links” or highlighted with different colors. Think of these as advertisements. Someone is paying money to display an ad to people who search for particular content online. This can be a very powerful tool, but not one covered in this toolkit.



The other type of result is called “Natural Search Results” or “Organic Search Results.” These results are ranked by the search engines based on a variety of factors and cannot be bought. The closer to the top of the list a result or “hit” is, the more relevant and valuable the result is to the string of words you used to search by. The goal of search engine optimization is to get your information at or near the top of the list.

Keyword Research

FNS has provided a basic list of relevant keyword research results, but you may wish or need to supplement these results with additional research of your own. To do so, follow the steps below:

1. Decide what the main subject areas are in your release.
2. Think of other ways to say those same ideas and make a list.
3. Using an online tool (see options in the sidebar), look up each word or phrase on your list.
4. Keep track of how often each term is searched for. Organize your list from most-searched-for to least-searched-for.
5. Choose the keywords that are both descriptive of your content and most popular according to the keyword research tools.



Online Resources

Free Online Keyword Research Tools

Keyword Discovery

<http://keyworddiscovery.com/search.html>

Google Keyword Tool

<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>

Word Tracker

<http://www.wordtracker.com/>

Why do I need to use a tool to tell me which words to use?

The way people search for information online is not always intuitive. For instance, “applying for food stamps,” “food stamp application,” and “apply for food stamps” are three phrases with almost identical meanings. In any traditional press release, you might use all three interchangeably.

However, keyword data from an online tool will tell you that “apply for food stamps” is used almost three times more often than “applying for food stamps.”

Query: food stamps	
Results 1 - 100 of 5964	Page: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Search Term	Total
food stamps	6225
apply for food stamps	612
florida food stamps	514
food stamps application	248
texas food stamps	238
applying for food stamps	223
food stamps florida	211
indiana food stamps	204
texas department of human services food stamps	193
apply for food stamps online	180
emergency food stamps	145
how to apply for food stamps	144
food stamps eligibility	125
application for food stamps	122
alabama food stamps	116
michigan food stamps	88
ebt food stamps	83
access florida food stamps	80
louisiana food stamps	78
how to get food stamps	75
california food stamps	74

The numbers in the “Total” column represent how often the term was searched for from a 10-percent sample of search engines over the last 12 months. Use the numbers to choose one term over another, but do not get hung up on the numbers themselves.

Hyperlinks

What is a hyperlink?

A hyperlink is a word, phrase, or image that you can click on to jump to a new document or a new section within the current document. Hyperlinks are found in nearly all Web pages, and let you click from page to page. Text hyperlinks are often blue and underlined, but don't have to be. Hyperlinks are often called just "links."

EXAMPLE

[Clicking here will take you to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service](http://www.fns.usda.gov) home page is an example of a hyperlink. Clicking on the red text, or "hypertext," will take you to a destination URL, in this case <http://www.fns.usda.gov>.

Why should I include hyperlinks in my online press release?

It is critical to include hyperlinks in your online release. Not doing so is a huge missed opportunity. Hyperlinks are important because they:

- Lead readers of your release to your Web site; and
- Count as objective votes for your Web site in the eyes of search engines.

Leading readers of your release to your Web site is important if you want to increase traffic to your site, where they can gather more information and ideally become repeat visitors, as they learn to view your site as an authority.

The second point is equally important to accomplishing the goals of an optimized release. As your press release is picked up by other Web sites, the release will include the hyperlinks you've inserted. Search engines look at these hyperlinks very favorably, and having many hyperlinks pointing to your site helps your site rank higher in search engines.

Choosing a Service

There are many services that will distribute your release online at various price levels. These companies also have customer service representatives who can help you determine which service is right for you and answer any questions you might have. Here are some additional factors you should consider when choosing a service to use.

Things To Consider

1. **BILINGUAL OR LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH** Not all vendors offer the same services. Some have very sophisticated translation and targeting options, while others have no distribution for languages other than English, although they will post the release on their site. Make sure to ask questions before selecting your service if other languages are a consideration.
2. **USE OF IMAGES, VIDEO, OR LOGOS** Most optimized release vendors let you include images and logos. Most will also let you include video—some simply require that the video is hosted on YouTube.com, while others need the actual video file to be uploaded. If a video is important, check to see which vendors include video in their fees.
3. **MEASUREMENTS** There are different levels of metrics and reporting after your release has been distributed. To learn more about ways you can supplement metrics that your release service provides, see the [Measurement](#) section of this tutorial.
4. **EXTRA FEATURES** Many services provide the option to attach downloadable files, “tags,” and “social bookmarks.” Tags and social bookmarks are Web 2.0 methods to flag what your release is about and make it easy to find and share.

What are the main differences between using a traditional wire service and an online optimized release service?

Where the release is distributed is one big difference—an online release should be more targeted to online news portals, online news search engines, and social media tools. This means that it is targeting the online news consumer and, in many cases, can reach the end user without ever being “picked up” (i.e., sought out by the media) in the traditional sense.

Depending on the service you use, the actual uploading and submission of the release may be different or similar to the experience you are used to from traditional wire services.

Optimized releases are also displayed alongside news stories in many news search engines—allowing you to control the headline, summary, and often the image associated with the search engine result. This control is crucial as more and more people find their news online. Search engine results pages are an increasingly significant opportunity to grab consumers.

Measuring Your Success

Unlike traditional wire services, most online distribution services will not provide you with a pick-up or coverage report. However, many online distribution services will provide the number of people who read or downloaded the release directly from their Web site.

Depending on your goal in distributing your release online, there are different steps you can take to measure how your release performed. Some suggestions are below.

GOAL

Distribute the content of your release to news outlets

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS

As mentioned, unlike traditional wire services you may be familiar with, most online distribution services will not provide you with a pick-up or coverage report. To measure how many online news outlets have picked up your release, try using a search engine to search for the title of your release a few days after it was sent. Two popular search engines that can be used for this include Google (www.google.com) and Yahoo! (www.yahoo.com).

In addition to searching for the title of your release, you can also search for your organization name, the name of the event or speaker you are promoting, and the central topic of your release to see if the content of the release was picked up by an outlet without the full body and title of the release.

GOAL

Distribute the content of your release to partners (in addition to news outlets)

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS

Using a similar process as described above, you can also see how many blogs pick up your release. The term “blog” is short for “weblog,” and is a Web site that displays in chronological order the postings by one or more individuals. Blogs can be written by journalists, but are often written by the general public. Some blogs are read by many people, while others are read by fewer people.

You can search for your release using one of the many blog search tools including:

- Google Blog Search <http://blogsearch.google.com/>
- Technorati <http://technorati.com/>
- IceRocket <http://www.icerocket.com/>

Technorati has a system called “Authority” to tell you how important and relevant they have determined different blogs to be. The higher a blog’s authority number, the more people are reading and linking to that particular blog.

GOAL

Increase traffic (Internet visitors) to your Web site

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS

To determine whether an online release has increased traffic to your Web site, you will need access to the traffic logs of your Web site. The person or organization who administers your Web site should be able to grant you access to these or pull information for you. You can either look for an overall increase in the number of visitors to your site in the time following the distribution of your release, or you can try to dig a bit deeper.

Most Web traffic logs should be able to tell you “Referrers” or “Referrals” to your site. This is a way of finding out where visitors to your site are coming from. If you use ABC Press Releases to distribute your release, the URL of your release will begin with www.ABCPressReleases.com, or a similar standard domain name. This allows you to search for your “Referrers” or “Referrals,” which shows how many people came from that domain name, and how many clicked through from your release.

Similarly, if you know your release was picked up by www.BestNewsSource.com, you can search for that domain in your “Referrals” or “Referrers” to find out how many people came to your site from that location.

GOAL

Drive your audience to a particular location on the Internet (a specific page, for example)

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS

You can use the same measurements as above, especially if overall traffic to your Web site has increased. If it has, and you included the specific URL you wanted people to visit, then it is likely that people were visiting that page. Most Web analytic programs will also provide you with statistics on the most popular pages on your site, which can also tell you how many people are visiting a particular page.

If the Web page you drove people to included a survey, registration for an event, or downloadable resources, you can also look for an increase in interaction with those features.

GOAL

Increase the online visibility and awareness of your organization, news, or event

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS

Search for your release on the major search engines, as well as the portion of their search engines specifically dedicated to news.

You can also search for the keyword or phrase you optimized for in your release. When you type a keyword or phrase into the news searches on the immediate day or so following the distribution of your release, your release should be returned high up on the page.

Think of this as basically a billboard for your organization – even if people don't click through to your release, they have seen your headline and in most cases your subhead or summary, and sometimes even an image or logo.

GOAL

Help increase the position of your Web page on search engine results pages

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS

This one takes longer to achieve than the others, but issuing optimized online releases with hyperlinks to your Web site is one very important element of increasing the position of your Web site on the search engine results page.

To illustrate the importance of improving your Web site's position: 80 percent of Internet traffic begins at a search engine, according to Harris Interactive.

Getting your Web site to rank highly in search engines can take a very long time, but is worth the effort. For example, 70 percent of people will click on something on the first results page of a search engine – that is to say, on one of the first 10 results. The numbers drop significantly from there. Approximately 15 percent of people will click on the second page of results 11-20. Finally, people will click on results 21-30 on the third page only about 10 percent of the time.

<i>Search Engine Results</i>	<i>Clicks</i>
Page 1	70%
Page 2	15%
Page 3	10%
Page 4	5%

GOAL

Create a multimedia release that can live online and include video, photos, or downloadable resources

HOW TO MEASURE SUCCESS

This is more straightforward than the others. Did you include video and images in your release or downloadable materials such as white papers or presentations? If so, you have created a multimedia release. With many online optimized release services, you can update the release over time to include new images or a video from an event. This means that you can send the release URL to any contacts you have and they will have instant access to not only the text of your release, but also any additional resources you want to provide to them.

Optimized Press Release Glossary of Terms

Terms	Definition
Anchor Text	Anchor text is the part of the hyperlink that you see when you are reading a Web page, email, or document. For instance in the example Food & Nutrition Service Home Page, the words “Food & Nutrition Service Home Page” are the anchor text. Anchor text is analyzed by search engines, so it is important to use relevant keywords in your hyperlinks when possible.
Hyperlink	A hyperlink is a word, phrase, or image that you can click on to jump to a new document or a new section within the current document. Hyperlinks are found in nearly all Web pages, allowing users to click their way from page to page. Text hyperlinks are often blue and underlined, but don’t have to be.
Keyword (or Key Phrase)	The one word or key phrase that is the most searched for and represents the central point of your release. You want to find the right term to use for your subject matter, so that people who are searching for relevant information online will find your content.
Keyword Research	Keyword research is the practice of researching keywords (terms) relevant to your Web site or online content and determining which are actually searched upon by search engine users to find information.
Metadata	Broadly, metadata, or meta data, is data about data. In terms of the Web and search engine optimization, metadata is descriptive text that you add to the code of a Web page to help search engines identify and index the content of that page. The three most common types of metadata on a Web page are the Title, the Description and the Keywords. While the keywords and description do not appear on the actual Web page, the Title is what shows up in the top bar of your browser when you are on a Web page, such as Food & Nutrition Service Home Page on http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/ . All three areas should include keywords determined through keyword research.
Optimized Press Release	An optimized press release conveys news or information, like a traditional release does, but it also includes language that is optimized for search engines and hyperlinks to Web pages. Optimized releases are also distributed online.
Organic Search	Also referred to as ‘Natural Search,’ organic search is the opposite of paid search and search engine marketing. Organic search engine results are ranked by the search engines based on a variety of factors and cannot be bought. The closer to the top of the list a result or “hit” is, the more relevant and valuable the result is to the string of words you used to search by. By utilizing search engine optimization, over time, an organization’s information can improve its organic search results, and appear at or near the top of the list.
Paid Search	Paid search, or search engine marketing, is basically purchasing ads associated with keywords. This is the opposite of organic search. You will often see paid search ads on the search engine results page along with the organically derived search results.
Search Engine Crawler	A search engine crawler (also known as a Web spider, Web crawler or Web robot) is a program run by search engines that browses the Web in a methodical, automated manner and indexes content for the engine.
Search Engine Marketing	Search engine marketing (SEM) is the practice of paying a search engine to run ads associated with keywords. These are the ads that you see on a search engine results page.
Social Bookmarking	Social bookmarking is a method for Internet users to store, organize, search, and manage bookmarks of Web pages on the Internet with the help of metadata. In a social bookmarking system, users save links to Web pages that they want to remember and/or share.
Technorati Tags	Technorati tags are labels that people use to make it easier to find blog posts, photos, and videos that are related on the popular blog search engine Technorati (www.technorati.com).

Proclamations

Who issues a proclamation?

Proclamations are usually issued by mayors, county commissions, governors, city commissions, State legislatures, and other public officials to recognize a local cause or achievement.

Why and when should an organization request a proclamation?

Organizations can use a proclamation to get more publicity when conducting events or outreach efforts. The timing is best around a major event or when undergoing a big media push.

How is a proclamation issued?

Your organization may submit a proclamation request. You may privately approach a mayor, State legislator, or city commissioner to sponsor your request. Provide draft language that you would like the issuing body to consider. That often helps to move the process forward. If the proclamation is to be issued at a public gathering, such as a city commission meeting, you may need to file the request a month or more in advance, depending on the rules of the issuing body.

What steps should be taken to issue a proclamation?

Once you have determined which public official(s) you would like to ask to issue a proclamation, it will be important to research whether any guidelines exist. This information can often be found on the officials' Web site, or can be obtained by calling a public affairs liaison. In many cases, you can apply for a proclamation by mail, email, or personal delivery.

What does a typical proclamation say?

The language in the proclamation should be crafted to drive home key points about your organization, your special outreach effort, and the value of SNAP. The proclamation template on the next page can provide some helpful language.

What does a typical proclamation look like?

Oftentimes, a proclamation is printed on heavy weight paper and affixed with a seal and official signatures. Your organization can proudly display it.

Proclamation Template

SNAP AWARENESS DAY/WEEK/MONTH

[TIMING TO BE PROCLAIMED]

By the [INSERT TITLE OF LOCAL OR STATE OFFICIAL...Such as Mayor of/Governor] of
[INSERT CITY/TOWN/STATE]

A PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the cornerstone of the Federal nutrition assistance safety net, providing more than 8.2 million households and 21 million low-income Americans with nutrition assistance;

WHEREAS, hunger is a problem that affects families and individuals, including children and the elderly;

WHEREAS almost half of those eligible for SNAP benefits are currently not receiving the benefits they need, and [INSERT STATE/LOCAL STATISTIC, IF POSSIBLE];

WHEREAS, each \$5 in new Federal SNAP benefits generates nearly double that in economic activity;

WHEREAS, SNAP is modern, with benefits now delivered via electronic (EBT) cards;

WHEREAS, food retailers who accept SNAP EBT cards are important partners fighting hunger in our community;

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Agriculture and the State of [INSERT NAME OF STATE] are working to simplify the SNAP application process;

WHEREAS, the STATE/CITY/TOWN of [INSERT NAME] is participating in SNAP's national outreach effort by conducting an awareness effort to help constituents determine potential eligibility and inform them on how to apply;

NOW, THEREFORE, I [INSERT OFFICIAL'S NAME AND TITLE] do hereby proclaim [TIMING – DAY, WEEK, MONTH] [SPECIFIC DATE as “SNAP Awareness Day/Week/Month” and call upon the community and partner organizations to celebrate with appropriate ceremonies to acknowledge these efforts.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand on this [INSERT DAY AND MONTH, YEAR]

Signature of Official

The Editorial Section

What is the editorial section?

The editorial section is the section of the paper in which the editors of the paper and others express their opinions on important issues facing the community. This section of the newspaper is typically well read by key community leaders and decision-makers who can help ensure the success of your efforts. Below are several tips for getting your messages and information on these pages. Keep in mind that the more you can tie your outreach efforts in to local happenings, the greater the likelihood of getting published.

What is a letter to the editor?

Letters to the editor are written by readers in response to an article that appeared within the past few days and submitted for publication in the newspaper. Keep on top of local news coverage around hunger, poverty, or families in need. This type of news coverage provides an opportunity for you to respond with helpful information.

What if no one contacts me about my letter to the editor?

If you have sent your letter to the editor and have not heard anything within a week, make a follow up call to check on its status. Be aware that editors receive hundreds of letters and may not immediately respond. A letter to the editor on a specific topic has a better chance of being published if more than one person or group responds. This is a good time to rally your partners and ask them to write to the paper as well; each letter, however, should be individually drafted. Form letters are usually ignored.

What is an opinion-editorial (op-ed)?

An op-ed is an article written by someone expressing their opinion about an important issue. Op-eds are submitted by community members. Editors decide which to print in the paper. Op-eds are an excellent forum to let people know about the benefits of SNAP because they allow you to share your point of view with much greater detail and persuasion than a short letter will permit.

What if no one contacts me about my op-ed?

Due to limited space, not every op-ed that is submitted can be printed. Most op-ed editors will respond to your submission within a week or two. If you have not heard back in that time frame, or if your piece is particularly time-sensitive, it is perfectly acceptable to call and ask about its status.



Tips & Tools

Tips to Write a Letter to the Editor

- Check out the newspaper's guidelines for publishing letters to the editor, usually printed on the editorial page itself.
- Begin by referring to the article to which you're responding, including its title and the date it appeared in print.
- Resist the urge to say everything you know. Keep your letter concise and make one clear point.



Tips & Tools

Tips to Get An Op-Ed Published

- Learn the rules. Research the newspapers' specific rules about submissions, such as word count, before you start writing. This information may be posted on the outlet's Web site.
- Make contact. Call the editorial page editors of the newspapers and talk to them about your column idea. They may have ideas about the direction you are taking that will increase the likelihood of being published.
- Use a hook. Include a "hook" or catchy aspect in your piece. Has there recently been a news story about hunger that would make an op-ed on SNAP timely? Perhaps there is new data on local poverty rates, or a special event coming up that will provide a hook.
- Use examples. Capture the reader's interest with illustrations, anecdotes, and personal stories. These persuasive tools help explain complicated issues and bring the human element to your op-ed.
- Stick to facts and solid arguments. Avoid alienating readers with inflammatory or accusatory remarks.
- Make a specific recommendation. State your opinion on the issue.
- Make a unique point. Offer a new point of view even if the newspaper itself editorialized recently about hunger or poverty.
- End with a bang. Summarize your argument and leave readers with information, advice, or an idea they or the community can act on, such as a challenge to increase enrollment of their neighbors and family members who are eligible.

What is an editorial board meeting?

Most newspapers have editorial boards who determine the position that the newspaper will take in its printed editorials. These representatives from the newspaper meet regularly to consider those positions. Meeting with this board as a group or with individual board members allows you to influence editorial coverage of hunger and SNAP issues. As a result of an editorial board meeting, a reporter may be assigned to cover the issue, or an editorial may appear in the paper.

Also consider joining an advisory board, county board, or nutrition board, if one exists in your community. Look to this group of individuals to present hunger and other related topics to the editorial board. There is a chance there will be no immediate outcome, but the meeting will introduce you and your partners to influential individuals at the paper, and position you as a knowledgeable source about SNAP. These are important relationships to cultivate, so follow up with new information from time to time.

Pointers to Set Up an Editorial Board Meeting With a Newspaper

- **Plan your timing.** You'll grab a few minutes of a board member's precious time in the same way that you'll get the attention of a beat reporter: a strong peg to a current news story.
- **Make an appointment.** Call the newspaper and ask who organizes editorial board meetings. In most instances, an assistant will either connect you directly to a board member or ask you to send a letter or email outlining your request. Most papers reserve regular hours for the board to meet, generally between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. The meetings are usually held in a small conference room at the newspaper's offices.
- **Assemble a team.** Rally your partners. Assemble a diverse group to meet with the editorial board, with each person having different perspectives and experiences related to SNAP benefits and hunger. Participants might include the head of a local food bank, a local grocer, and an elected official. Let the newspaper know ahead of time whom you are bringing.
- **Rehearse your presentation.** Designate one person to act as the spokesperson and introduce the issue (e.g., "Many people go hungry unnecessarily and aren't receiving the SNAP benefits they need. When people use SNAP benefits, everyone in the community wins."). Limit your remarks to 15 or 20 minutes.
- **Leave written information behind.** After the presentation, the members of the editorial board generally ask questions (see the Q&A in the [Introduction Section](#) for helpful hints). Be sure to leave written information about your organization, hunger, how SNAP benefits can help and their positive impact on your community, etc.

Purpose Of Community Calendar Listings

Newspapers, radio and TV stations, and local access/community cable TV channels often have time or space set aside for a calendar listing of public events happening in and around a city or State. This publicity is free and easy to obtain.

Most media outlets that have a calendar section assign a specific staff member — usually a calendar editor — to receive submissions and compile the listings.

Respect the media outlet's deadlines. A general rule of thumb is to submit listing information a few weeks in advance; however, it is best to contact the specific outlet to determine timing and preferences (fax, email, U.S. mail) for receiving calendar information. This is also a perfect opportunity to inquire whether or not the outlet accepts corresponding images and, if so, what the preferred format is (hard copy, JPEG, TIF) and the resolution or image size needed.

If you are submitting a calendar listing by U.S. mail, it is recommended that you send a cover letter and listing two to three weeks before the event date. Remember to put your letter on your organization's letterhead; if you are submitting an image along with your letter, be sure to include a sample caption.

A CALENDAR LISTING SHOULD CONTAIN

- Who
- What
- Where
- When
- Contact name and phone number
- Cost, if any

Community Calendar Listing Template

[DATE]

Dear Community Calendar Editor,

Too many low-income individuals and families in [NAME OF STATE/CITY/TOWN] are not getting the food they need. In fact, [X NUMBER] low-income people in our community are at risk for hunger and poor nutrition, and many of these are children. Studies indicate that, nationally, about 50 percent of those eligible for SNAP benefits are not getting the benefits they need. Here in [NAME OF STATE/CITY/TOWN], [INSERT STATE/LOCAL STATISTIC, IF POSSIBLE].

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the cornerstone of the Federal nutrition assistance safety net. Today, the program provides more than 8.2 million households and 21 million low-income Americans with nutrition assistance.

To increase enrollment at the [STATE/LOCAL] level, [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] has embarked on a major outreach effort to help low-income individuals and families learn about their eligibility for SNAP benefits and how to apply. On [DATE AND TIME], [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] will be [EVENT INFORMATION DETAILS] at [LOCATION].

Please include the following notice in your community calendar listing. If you have any questions about our program, please contact me at [PHONE NUMBER].

Thank you.

[CONTACT NAME]

[NAME OF ORGANIZATION]

Social Media

This chapter will help you understand social media and how to work it into your communications activities. Sidebar information and a full glossary define and explain commonly used social media terms.

Section I. What Is Social Media?

Social media describes online tools used to share and publish opinions, insights, experiences, and perspectives and include blogs, message boards, podcasts, wiki sites, and vlogs. Messages can be delivered via text, images, audio, and video. Social media tools also allow users to respond to what they have read, listened to, or watched by posting comments that all other readers can see.

These days, almost everyone has access to the Web, either at work, at home, or on the go through a mobile device. Even though low-income individuals or families may not have easy access to a computer, many increasingly connect to the Web through their mobile phones. Since the Web and social media tools are so accessible to the public, it is important to understand how to use these tools to reach your audience(s).

How is social media different from traditional forms of media?

Traditional communications such as television, newspaper, and radio go one way, from the producer to a general audience. See the comparison with social media below.

<i>Traditional Media</i>	<i>Social Media</i>
Publisher or broadcaster is in control	Audience is in control
One way communication—no conversation	Two-way communication—open dialogue
Organization creates the content	Users can create or help generate content

Is social media and social marketing the same?

Social marketing is an approach to communicating that builds awareness about a social issue and works to change people's behaviors or attitudes and to improve the lives of individuals and communities. Examples include programs to raise money for charity or to increase awareness of a health issue. Social media can be used as part of a social marketing program—for example, an organizational Facebook page that helps promote a fundraising event. However, social marketing does not imply the use of social media.



Social Media Glossary A—E

Application or app

A small program downloaded and run on a computer desktop, mobile device, or social network that is designed to help the user perform a specific task.

Blog (also Web log)

A journal-style Web site on which an individual or group enters text, called a “post,” resulting in a running conversation displayed in reverse chronological order.

Consumer-generated content

Digital content that is produced by self-publishers and sometimes picked up or referenced in traditional media.

Digital communications

Myriad of outbound communications tactics that leverage digital technology to deliver messages: email, video, text messaging, online advertising, optimized press releases, podcasts, videos, etc.

Digital news room (also online pressroom)

A robust source of news and media content such as news releases, contacts, background information, and digital media assets including photos, graphics, audio, video, and multimedia content. Often incorporated into an organization's Web site.

Email marketing

A form of direct marketing that uses emails to deliver a message and promote a service or product to your target audience.

What are the benefits and limitations of using social media?

Engaging the public and/or media brings both benefits and limitations. With social media, it's important to understand that these tools are powered by people; as a result, the tools require time and energy to manage (remember, this is a two-way conversation). However, the time invested will help form a relationship between SNAP and your audience and create a deeper connection with the community you serve.

Benefits and limitations of social media can be summarized as follows:

Benefits	Challenges
Open connections and receive feedback from the communities you serve	Takes time to manage—to learn and develop relationships
Low cost; many tools are free	Not always “on message”—can sometimes be too informal
Flexible and fun—help to generate new ideas	Uncontrolled—you may receive negative feedback
Allow for creativity and experimentation	Takes time to refresh content
Increase likelihood your site will be found in search engines	Can lead to information overload

What are some social media trends?

Social media is popular because it helps people find and connect with each other in new and easy ways. With social media, you can connect virtually with people all around the world who share the same goals, face the same issues, and experience the same challenges.

People are increasingly using search engines such as Google, Yahoo!, or Bing to find what they need, when they need it. It's important that your information appear on the first page of search results; a first-page landing, particularly on Google, can carry a similar prestige and visibility to being mentioned on the front page of The New York Times.

How do you get on the first page? The more links you have to your Web site from other well-trafficked sites, the more credible your Web site is and the higher your search engine rank or position will be.



Social Media Glossary F—P

Facebook

A popular global social network where individuals may publish and maintain profiles and connect with other users. Businesses, organizations, and ideas may also publish and maintain special profiles.

Influencer

An active and well-connected individual online. Usually, these individuals have large followings and reach a lot of people, but they can also be highly influential in molding the views of a specific audience or group of audiences you want to reach.

Microblogging

A form of online publishing that allows users to send very brief text updates and messages to a network of subscribers. These messages can be submitted by a variety of means, including text messaging, instant messaging, email, or the Web. Twitter is an example.

Mobile marketing

A form of marketing and communicating through cell phones and mobile devices. Can be used to deliver text messages, email, or applications to download.

Online monitoring

Tracking of online coverage and conversation, usually for reporting or responding purposes.

Podcast

Audio recording that is hosted on a Web page and accessible for individual downloads.



Tips & Tools

Adding social media tools to your SNAP outreach program will create more links back to your site. When your link shows up on a search engine's front page, you're much more likely to drive visitors to your content and create opportunities for dialogue.

Important Do's and Don'ts For Using Social Media

DO:

- Define your goals. Always think first before starting to use social media. Be sure that using the tool will help you to achieve the results that you want.
- Participate actively. Contribute constructive comments and updates. You will gain trust and others will appreciate you.
- Be flexible. Social media tools are often upgraded, so stay flexible and up-to-date on what's current.
- Be yourself! Social media allow us to show our personalities—in fact, doing so is welcomed and appreciated.
- Provide value. Carefully consider everything you publish. How does this help the people that your organization serves? If you discover that it is not helpful, try to find a way to improve it.
- Keep a consistent voice. If you are using more than one social media tool or channel, be consistent to maintain the same tone and personality.
- Create a response plan. It is very important to respond as quickly as possible. If you do not, the conversation can die or others will drop it out of boredom. However, it is vital to be prepared. Develop a plan to prepare for negative situations that may affect your organization online, and include suggested guidance for responding.

DON'T:

- Forget that social media is powered by real people. Be yourself and avoid sounding overly scripted.
- Ignore your community. If your organization has a page or group in a social network, be sure to keep the content fresh. Respond to people quickly if they reach out to you.
- Lose track of the real world. Social media tools might be great, but nothing will ever come close to live interaction with real people.
- Forget to monitor. Keeping track of news about your organization and issue will allow you to provide more relevant content and information to the people who need it most.
- Spam! Be sure that updates and messages to others online are relevant and timely. If they are not, you may lose trust if those on the receiving end consider them spam.
- Try to do too much too fast. Remember, every organization is different. Choose the tools that make the most sense for your organization. With time, and after evaluating what is likely to be effective and practical, more tools can be folded into the mix.
- Engage in dishonest behavior online. Do not lie, scam, or plagiarize other content that you find online. If you would like to use a sentence of two of someone else's blog post in a Twitter update or on your organization's blog, be sure to cite the reference with a link.

Section II. Organizations and Social Media

Why should organizations use social media tools to promote SNAP?

Social media tools provide everyday people with a platform to share ideas and opinions—in short, everyone who wants to say something can now be heard.

A quick online search shows why it's important for organizations to embrace social media. A Google search for “food stamps” gets thousands of results. People are searching and commenting about SNAP with or without your input. Helping them locate local, credible SNAP information means you need to show up in their search results. Using social media tools allows you to create conversations as well as locate and join existing ones.

Can you commit to social media success?

Your organization may not be ready to use social media if you're unable to commit to the following guiding principles ... and that's OK. The most important thing to do now is to think about how social media might help now or in the future.

Section III. Social Media Strategy

How do you create a social media strategy?

As with public relations or marketing, it's important to develop a strategy before using social media tools. Ask the following questions to get started:

- Who is my audience?
- How do they access the Internet? From home, the library, or mobile?
- Do they use social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter?
- What are they interested in learning more about?
- How can we help them make more informed decisions?
- Am I willing to have an open dialogue and risk negative feedback?
- Am I able to respond quickly to maintain the dialogue?
- How can I set up my social media platforms in a way that will allow the most effective use of our own time?
- Are other organizations in my community using social media? How can we partner and work together?

Asking these questions in advance will not only keep you focused and organized, but also will ensure that you are spending your resources wisely.



Tips & Tools

Guiding Principles for Social Media Success

- Provide value to audiences with helpful, interesting, relevant, and timely information.
- Create two-way communication.
- Select the best channels for reaching the target audience based on where conversations are already happening.
- Support the organization's mission with social media activities that make the most sense for the organization and audience.
- Make it a priority across the organization and not just for one person or group.
- Give all your social media channels a consistent voice and look.

The following are additional points and examples to consider when using social media:

The best way to get started is to look at ways other community organizations use social media, while also understanding the challenges they may face.

In Arizona, a Nutrition Network Program Manager uses the agency's Web site as the primary hub for information. The Web site includes a monthly newsletter, tips for parents, and recipes. The manager is planning to use Twitter to share recipes. In the future, the agency plans to use Facebook as a place to host conversations about nutrition education and to provide a forum for its partners. While this particular nutritionist sees the value of social media, she is also concerned about negative comments and Facebook wall posts.

In Oregon, the Nutrition Education Program Coordinator used Facebook on a trial basis to support a specific campaign, and based on that success plans to take the program statewide. Her main reason for using social media is to connect program participants with one another and with program staff. Her biggest hurdle is identifying staff who have enough time to take on this project.



Social Media Glossary R—S

RSS

Acronym for Really Simple Syndication. RSS “readers” allow Web users to easily “feed out” or “pull in,” by way of subscription, selected Web content to or from another Web property.

RSS reader

Also called a news aggregator; allows users to electronically capture and display in a central location information and content from a variety of online media outlets, including e-zines, Web sites, and blogs using RSS feeds. Example: Google Reader.

Social bookmarking

A popular method of classifying, sharing, and storing electronic content to facilitate easy sorting or search. The bookmarks, or tags, help users identify relevant content as well as rank content based on the number of viewers, relevance, etc. Example: Delicious.

Social media

Online tools used to share and publish opinions, insights, experiences, and perspectives; include blogs, message boards, podcasts, wiki sites, and vlogs. Messages can be delivered via text, images, audio, and video. Social media tools also allow readers to respond to what they have read, listened to, or watched by posting comments that all other readers can see.

Social media news release (SMNR)

Also new media release or social media press release. Traditional press release content that is repurposed for optimal online visibility in Web search and encourages Web-user interaction. Key messages are “chunked” into shorter bits and include text links to relevant content, tags (keywords), multimedia, and other assets that encourage user dialogue and content sharing.

Social networking site (also social network)

Web site featuring focused, often user-generated content of interest to site visitors who openly converse; includes personal profiles, blogs, discussion groups, photos, music, and videos. Examples: Facebook, LinkedIn.

When you are ready to start planning your social media program, consider the following:

Audience

As with any marketing effort, the first step is to identify the audiences you need to reach and how they use social media. If you are considering a Facebook profile, search to see if anyone is talking about your organization or issue on Facebook and identify those groups or individuals before you set up an organizational presence. You will need a Facebook account to do this. If you don't have one, you can assign a staff member to set one up.

If you are considering a blog, find out who the key bloggers are in your subject area. You can do this by doing a Google blog search (<http://www.google.com/blogsearch>). This will allow you to observe what your audience is saying, and will help you plan for content down the road. It is also helpful to see how other organizations like yours use social media.

Objectives

Be specific and think about what you want to accomplish:

- Increase awareness about SNAP?
- Encourage consumers who are not participating in SNAP to use the prescreening tool?
- Share low-cost, healthy recipes with SNAP participants?

Setting a social media objective is not about blasting your message out to a mass audience. It is about reaching out to targeted influential audience members, developing relationships, and having a conversation.

Staff Roles

Who is going to implement your social media strategy within your organization? Whether you hire someone new or assign the role to a current staff member or volunteer, that person should be comfortable using the tools, be passionate about your organization's programs, and should enjoy interacting with other people.

Policy

Social media requires a mix of authenticity, openness, and transparency, making it important to have an upfront understanding of what your staff will and will not do with social media tools. The process of creating a policy can also lead to a deeper understanding of the benefits and value of social media. The policy you set up should be written down and should be prepared with the advice of your organization's legal counsel.

This policy will need to include guidelines and procedures on a number of issues.



Tips & Tools

If your organization will be setting up profiles on social networking sites, you will need guidelines to address how staff members identify themselves as members of your organization. In addition, the policy will need to cover guidelines for responding to negative comments on a blog or online forum, including what your organization will do when a fan or a critic sets up a page on Facebook that misrepresents your message, logo, or anything else affiliated with your brand, including pictures and videos.

Time Commitments

A social media program requires an investment in time more than maintenance, especially if you are learning as you go. But as you become more familiar with the tool and the workflow, it will be less time-consuming.

It is crucial to maintain any conversation that you start, and to respond quickly to comments from others. Letting a conversation lag or lapse will cause visitors to leave, and some may not return. Your social media plan needs ongoing, consistent monitoring.

Section IV. Social Media Tactics and Tools

Below here is a list of helpful media and Web sites so you can stay current on new tools and technology.

As new tools arrive and old tools are updated frequently, it's important to stay current on what's new in social media. Some helpful Web sites and recommended blogs to read regularly include:

- **Mashable:** Updated throughout the day, Mashable (<http://www.mashable.com>) is the Web's leading resource on social media news and tools.
- **Read Write Web:** Another resource for news and tools, Read Write Web (<http://www.readwriteweb.com>) also provides helpful tips on how to use social media.
- **Beth's Blog:** Written by nonprofit social media guru Beth Kanter, Beth's Blog (<http://beth.typepad.com>) is written especially for nonprofits to learn how to use social media.
- **Word of Mouth Marketing Association:** An organization for agencies and companies that regularly work in the social media space, WOMMA (<http://www.womma.org>) provides readers and members with helpful news and tips, in addition to a code of ethics for communications and marketing professionals on how to connect with their audiences through social media.
- **Marketing Profs Daily Fix Blog:** A group blog written by many well-known social media experts, the Daily Fix (<http://www.mpdailyfix.com>) blog provides helpful examples of how companies and organizations successfully use social media.
- **Social Media Monitoring Tools:** The following are easy-to-use sites and tools for real-time social media search, analysis, and, in some cases, email alerts.) <http://www.socialmention.com>; <http://www.howsociable.com>)
- **Social Media Policies Wiki:** A helpful collection of sample social media policies from a wide range of organizations and companies (wiki.altimetergroup.com).



Social Media Glossary T–Z

Tags

Keywords or phrases assigned to Web content, such as blog posts, wiki entries, photos, podcasts, etc., to facilitate easy organization, called indexing and searching.

Twitter

Free social networking and microblogging service that allows users to send and read other users' updates (tweets), which are text-based posts of up to 140 characters. Updates are displayed on the user's profile page and delivered to other users who have signed up to receive them.

Virtual world

Computer-based, simulated environment in which users access a downloadable program that lets them interact with one other via avatars, i.e., two- or three-dimensional graphical representations of real-world life forms. Example: Second Life.

Vlog

A blog consisting of video posts, accessible for individual downloads using "pull" technology such as RSS feeds and video-capable MP3 players.

Web 2.0

A term coined to loosely describe Web-based services such as blogs, wiki sites, and social networks that emphasize online collaboration and content-sharing among users.

Widget

A "mini-Web page" or a piece of content that you can "snag" and then embed in various personal Web sites. Distribution usually includes tools that allow users to easily port or grab code to embed the widget across their own sites and social network profiles. For example, a widget could be a graphical display of your most recent tweets on Twitter or of your Facebook fans and posts. Widgets are typically embedded in the sidebar of blogs.

Wiki

A Web environment that allows visitors to openly edit the content, used primarily for collaborative content development and publishing. Example: Wikipedia.

What are social media outreach tactics?

Like public relations or marketing, many channels and tactics can be used to deliver messages via social media. Social media programs always begin with listening. What is your audience saying? What does it need and how can you help? The main tactics for executing a social media strategy are listening, participating, sharing your story, creating community, and generating online coverage. The following describes several tactics, along with tools to achieve them.

Listening

These tools help you find conversations that are important to your organization and issues, good or bad. They help you determine who is talking about you and how you can best respond.

- **Google Alerts:** Google Alerts (<http://www.google.com/alerts>) are email updates of the latest relevant Google results from news sites and blogs based on a search term or topic. You can subscribe through email and Really Simple Syndication (RSS). RSS allows you to “pull in” relevant content via a subscription service. Google Alerts help you monitor a news story or issue, keep current with your industry, and track who is writing about you and your organization.
- **Technorati:** Technorati (<http://www.technorati.com>) is a search engine just for blogs. Technorati tracks “blog reactions” or links to blogs. Search for your organization or issue on Technorati, and subscribe to RSS alerts—that way, when someone blogs about your program, you will know about it.
- **Twitter Search:** Twitter is a social network, specifically known as microblogging. This form of online publishing allows you to send very brief updates and messages (maximum 140 characters) to a network of subscribers. Twitter conversations happen fast, and the easiest way to track them is to use the Twitter search field (<http://www.search.twitter.com>) to locate instances where your organization is mentioned. You can also use <http://www.tweetdeck.com> or <http://www.hootsuite.com> to monitor Twitter users and keywords.
- **RSS Reader:** Also called a news aggregator, this allows you to capture relevant copy efficiently and in one place to read when you can. Rather than visiting 20 different blogs every morning, you can have all new posts delivered straight to your RSS reader. Bloglines, Google Reader, and NetVibes are popular RSS readers; review a few and use the reader you like best.



¹Google Reader

Participating on Twitter and Blogs

Listening will naturally lead to joining the conversation.

- **Twitter:** Once you've listened a while on Twitter, it is time to join and engage! First, you will need to set up your account. The social media blog Mashable has a great step-by-step guide on how to get started and use Twitter: <http://mashable.com/guidebook/twitter>. Remember, having a Twitter presence requires making a commitment. If you are unsure of the time and resources, remain in listening mode until you are ready. You can always address questions and concerns you discover on Twitter on other platforms, such as directly through the email provided on the user's Web site, through a blog, or on Facebook.



² New York City Food Bank Twitter Page

- **Comment on blogs:** If you are using Google News Alerts, chances are you will receive an alert to a post or story that directly names your organization. In situations where you want to respond, it's important to know when to comment and when not to engage with an online response.

If a blog post or comment is negative, think about your response before answering. Ask yourself, "Will my comment help solve the problem? Will my comment help improve my organization's relationship with this individual?" If the answers are yes, proceed with the comment, especially if you are responding to inaccurate information in the blog post. If not, reconsider your approach based on expected outcome and whether the blog is widely read by your audience.

Whether responding to a positive or a negative post, be sure to identify who you are and who you work for. Include a link to your organization's Web site or blog, if you have one. This is called transparency, and it is very important as you represent your organization both online and offline.

Sharing Your Story

The next step is to *share* your story using social media. You can do this through blogging, podcasting, sharing photos on Flickr or videos on YouTube, or any number of other social media tools. It is very important for you to determine which tool or combination of tools is the best fit for your organization. The challenging part of sharing your story, though, is getting viewers, readers, and listeners to pass along your story to others!

- **Blogs:** Blogs are a great way to quickly and easily publish and share your organization's most recent news and updates all in one convenient location.

Requirements:

- Time commitment
- Editorial calendar: a plan for content month-by-month based on topics, seasons, and issues or questions of interest to your audience
- Available resources: technical, content, and staffing



³ USDA Blog

- **Flickr:** Flickr is a popular photo-sharing site that allows you to upload, store, organize, and share images with everyone or just a group. You could use Flickr to share photos of a recent SNAP event, seminar, or important meeting. Additionally, you may also create photo pools in Flickr, which allow you to invite members of a Flickr group to contribute images to the pool. This can be especially helpful if a large group is contributing content for a campaign, program, or event.



Tips & Tools

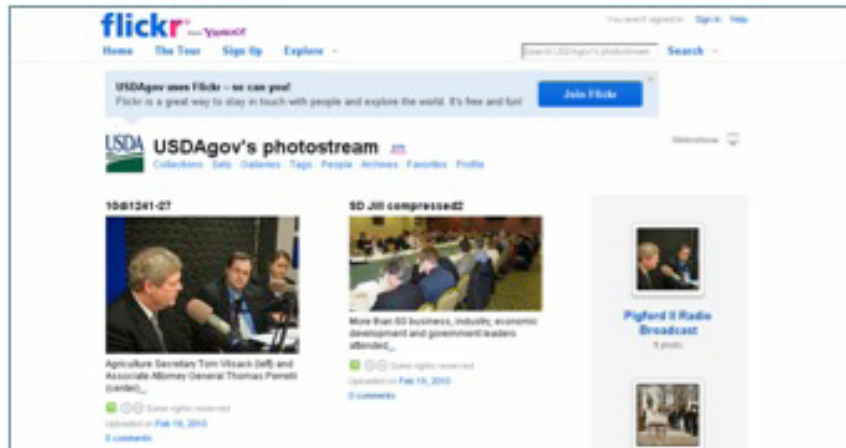
How to Approach Social Media

Social media is not "one size fits all." Each organization's approach will be different because every organization has different needs, missions, resources, and culture.



Tips & Tools

Always ask for permission before posting photos of people online, and follow your organization's policy in the event signed permission forms are needed.



⁴ USDA Flickr Page

- YouTube:** With YouTube, you can create an online channel to post and share your organization's videos. YouTube also has a helpful guide designed especially for nonprofits (http://www.youtube.com/t/ngo_tips). Try recording an interview with your colleagues or post a short video highlight of an event. Once you post the video, let people know it's there through other communications channels. Partner with like-minded groups by subscribing to their YouTube channels and encourage them to subscribe to yours. Be sure to tag your videos appropriately and accurately so viewers are able to find them when they are searching. And again, be sure to keep privacy in mind and get permission before posting.



⁵ Feeding America YouTube Channel

- **Podcasts:** A podcast is an online audio recording that can be downloaded to an iPod or streamed straight from a Web site or blog. Podcasts are a great way to capture an interview of your customers or leadership that can then be distributed using social media. Podcasts can be created using software or free Web applications like <http://www.blogtalkradio.com>. BlogTalkRadio lets you record, broadcast, archive, and share your podcasts online.



⁶ Project Bread Podcasts

- **Twitter:** For those with less time to create content but who still have a lot to say, Twitter is a great platform from which to share short updates with your audiences—including journalists, who often search Twitter to find leads, information, and resources.



⁷ Capital Area Food Bank Twitter

Creating Community

Social networking tools connect people, regardless of location, and can build a community around your issue or organization. Once you have an online community, you can engage people and inspire them to take action. Many social networks provide users with personal profiles that they create and control.

To keep a community growing and engaged, it is important to keep it updated with new content and information. You may also want to ask your community members what they would like to see on the social network from your organization. Keep the content relevant and fresh, and don't be afraid to experiment. Post a video you think is entertaining and related to your issue, or share a link to a news story that relates to your issue.

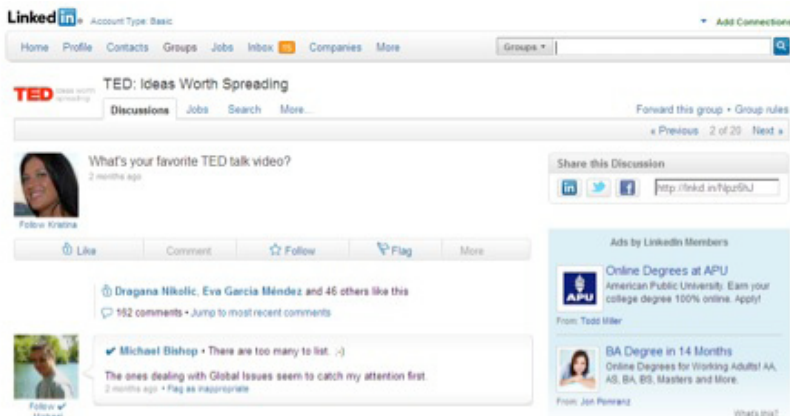
Popular social networks and tools include:

- Facebook:** Perhaps the most popular of all social networks, Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>) gives organizations the opportunity to create Fan Pages or Groups where people can gather and share information. Fan Pages are most often used by brands and organizations, whereas Groups are created around events or issues. Facebook has a helpful guide for organizations on creating a Facebook Fan Page: http://www.facebook.com/facebookpages?v=box_3#!/advertising/?pages. A guide for those interested in a Facebook Group can be found here: <http://www.facebook.com/help/#!/help/?page=414>.



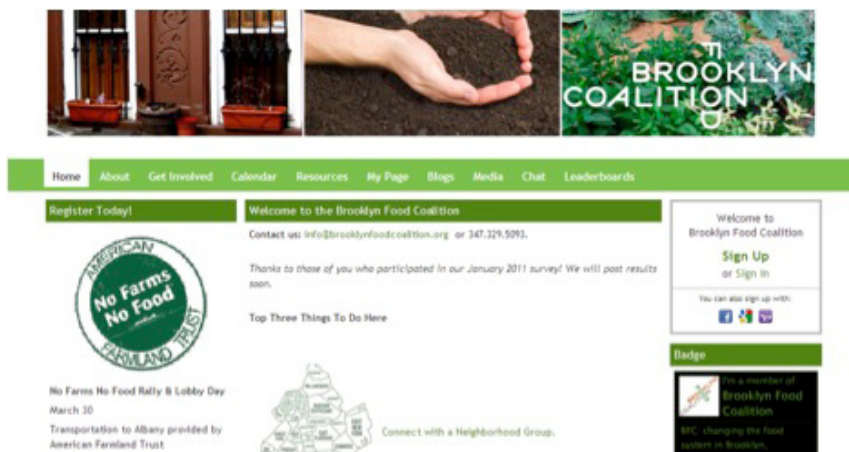
⁸ USDA Facebook Fan Page

- **LinkedIn:** Used most frequently for job searching and professional networking, LinkedIn (<http://www.linkedin.com>) allows users to create profiles that display work history and experience. They can also connect to others by joining a group or connecting with employers, creating groups about issues or skills, or creating groups for like-minded professionals. For example, you could create a group for people who work in hunger prevention or advocacy.



⁹LinkedIn Group Example

- **BigTent:** A free social network development program, BigTent (<http://www.bigtent.com>) is a tool that allows you to create your own social network for free. With the easy-to-use platform, you can create your own network around an organization, issue, or group. You can set it up so that it is open to anyone, or completely private. Members have their own profiles and can connect with others on those profiles or in group areas, such as discussion boards. When considering BigTent or any other community platform, it's important to think carefully about whether or not you need to create your own social network or use one that already exists, like Facebook. When you are conducting your needs assessment, ask your community members what they would prefer and think about how each social network option might serve them. You might also check with potential partners and determine whether presenting yourselves online as a coalition would be more beneficial.



¹⁰ Brooklyn Food Coalition Ning Profile

Generating Online Coverage

Sometimes it's not enough to share information through social media and social networks and hope that the "right" people find it. To truly engage the right audience, it might be necessary to connect directly through additional outreach.

Key to this type of outreach is the development of relationships with digital publishers and influencers; these include Web site editors, bloggers, online community leaders, and, in some cases, traditional journalists who also publish online.

Outreach to online publishers is similar to media relations, but is conducted exclusively within email. Online influencers differ from traditional media contacts in that many are not trained journalists. As a result, their needs, expectations, and approaches to content are different.

Successful online outreach relies on two things:

- **Content that is tailored and unique to each target.** Unlike traditional reporters who do their own reporting and tap their own sources, online targets are open to having most of the work done for them in advance. This gives you the opportunity to assemble your own information and deliver it more directly.

Digital targets like content such as:
 - Pre-drafted Q&As, which they can easily post on their sites
 - Q&A via email, which they present as "interviews"
 - Video interviews and other visual content
 - Exclusive images and graphics
- **An official spokesperson or well-regarded observer (someone whose information and experiences relate to the audience).** For instance, if you want to connect with an online publisher who writes about parenting and child care, it is important to identify someone from your organization who has a connection to parenting and/or understands child care issues. This may not always be a senior-level person; just be sure that whomever you choose is comfortable communicating in this new space.

Step 1 Research

Based on your audience and content, research will help you find the right people to connect with online. A longer list isn't always better; instead, focus on finding the right targets.

Step 2 Reach Out

Once you've identified the right influencers, look for a way to get in touch. Most online outreach is conducted through email, so make sure you have correct and current email addresses. Also, be sure to look for any preferences as to how they like to be contacted or "pitched" on their Web sites. Many online publishers state their preferences or indicate "PR-friendly" status, meaning you have the green light to get in touch. Here are a few suggestions for reaching out:

- **Be brief in your email.** Explain exactly why your message is important to them and to their readers, and provide them with links to content (no attached files) and additional resources.
- **Provide contact information.** Be sure to give them your name and other pertinent contact information. Provide them with a brief description of your organization.
- **Avoid jargon.** With online outreach, there is no need to insert "buzz words" or clever language. Be yourself!

Step 3 Follow Up

After you initially email your contact list, feel free to send a follow-up note after a few days. If you don't hear back, that's okay. Your contact may be busy or think your message wasn't an exact fit for his or her readers. However, if you do hear back, be sure to provide additional information and promptly answer any questions. Finally, if your information is posted, thank them. Keep in touch if you have relevant new content.

How does social media fit into current SNAP outreach and promotional efforts?

Using social media requires strategy, planning, and integration with other communications activities. Social media can be particularly powerful when combined with traditional forms of outreach, communication, and marketing. Just be sure to consider carefully how these tools help you reach your communications goals.

- When **drafting a press release** for traditional media, make it appealing to bloggers and online publishers by adding social media-friendly and shareable content, such as links to videos and images relating to the release. For example, see how the software company Cisco incorporates social media content into its press releases and announcements: <http://newsroom.cisco.com/dlls/index.html>
- When **scanning newspapers for coverage** about your issue or organization, use Google or another search engine, like Yahoo! or Bing, to find blogs and Web sites that are also writing about your issue and/or organization. Google provides some good tips here: <http://www.google.com/support/websearch/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=134479>



Tips & Tools

Think of social media as ingredients that can be added to the larger mix of communication activities that you already carry out (e.g., distributing press releases, sending a newsletter to your partners and customers, pitching television or newspaper reporters, etc.).

- When **pitching TV or newspaper reporters** about your organization's programs, consider adding a relevant local blogger to your list. Try typing the name of your city into a search engine along with the word "blog" to see what comes up. For example, a search for "Kansas City blog" produces a number of potential bloggers to connect with in the Kansas City area. Just be sure to read each blog very carefully to determine whether the blogger will be interested in your content and in your organization. Once you find a blog that you think would appreciate your information, scan the blog again to see who the blogger reads and who the blogger links to, as this may provide additional local bloggers for you to consider in your outreach.
- If you regularly **send partners and customers newsletters or announcements** through the mail, consider how you can extend the reach of your content by sending that information through email, Twitter, or a blog. Also, consider adding the Web site address for the social media platforms you use to the direct mail you send as a way to drive traffic to your online destinations.

Section V. Social Media Monitoring and Measurement

How to measure the success of social media efforts?

How can you tell if it is worth it? A measurement process can help you track the results of your efforts to communicate hard and soft data. By mixing these two types of measurements, you will see what is and is not working within your social media strategy. You also will be able to discover trends, new influencers in your community, and different channels and places online to connect with those you serve. Here are some examples of hard and soft data:

<i>Hard Data</i>	<i>Soft Data</i>
Number of newsletter subscribers	Engagement and interaction with those you serve
Number of followers on Twitter or fans on Facebook	Reputation
Staff time saved by using social media	Loyalty
Cost savings from using social media	Satisfaction
Donations	Sentiment—positive or negative feedback in media coverage
Increased rank in Google and Yahoo! search engine results	Feedback from those you serve
Increased coverage in newspapers, TV news, and online	

Now that you know what kind of information to look for, you need to learn how to find it and where to look. There are a number of free online tools that can help you identify these data quickly and easily; a few examples of these tools are included at the end of this chapter.

Keep in mind that since these tools are free, they are not always 100 percent accurate. This is especially true if they try to determine whether a piece of content is positive or negative. These free tools are great for quick data collection, but be sure to experiment and find the tool that works best for your needs.

How do I showcase and communicate our social media success?

Once you have the measurement metrics in place, use them to tell the story of your social media strategy. One way to do this is by writing a case study. Write out the challenges your organization faced before using social media, the solutions you created with social media, and then the results.

Once you have the case study, share it with your colleagues and partners to illustrate the value of social media. Doing so will not only highlight your work but also may provide you with more support to further incorporate social media tools into your organization's projects.

The following social media tools are free to use and can help measure your social media activities:

Facebook Insights: A tool to monitor engagement and influence on your Facebook page. As page administrator, you can access data about your page from the Facebook Insights dashboard. The data includes statistics such as daily and monthly active users, daily new "likes," daily interactions like comments, the geographic location of your visitors, external referrals, internal link traffic, and more.

Klout: Provides a summary of your organization's social influence by displaying a ranking that factors in your reach and impact on Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn.

Bit.ly URL Shortener: Bit.ly not only shortens your URL, but also offers analytics and click data for every link shortened.

Advanced Twitter Search: The advanced features can be used to find tweets about yourself and your organization.

YouTube Insight: Enables you to view detailed statistics about the number of views and popularity for the videos you have uploaded to YouTube. NOTE: You need to have a verified YouTube account to use this feature.

Flickr: Flickr provides metrics that enable you to see statistics such as views for your photos, sets, and galleries separated under categories such as today, yesterday, and all-time. It lets you know about your most viewed photos, and also tells you how many have received comments.

Social Mention: A free social media analysis platform that enables you to easily track and measure what others are saying about you online by monitoring more than 100 social media sites, including Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube.

Technorati.com: The leading blog search engine and directory, Technorati.com indexes more than a million blogs. Technorati.com tracks not only the authority and influence of blogs, but also the most comprehensive and current index of who and what is most popular in the Blogosphere.

Partnerships

How can partnerships help my organization with outreach?

Although you can conduct SNAP outreach alone, your efforts will be more successful if you work with like-minded organizations. Since only employees of local SNAP offices can certify clients for benefits, one of your most critical partners is your local SNAP office. It is important to establish a relationship with their employees before implementing your outreach efforts.

Partnerships with other groups can expand your ability to get the word out about SNAP benefits by:

- Gaining entry into new demographic and geographic areas;
- Providing new avenues of communication;
- Increasing the visibility and credibility of your message through a unified community voice;
- Leveraging your limited resources and making sure your efforts are not duplicative.

Here is what you will find in this section:

- Ten steps for establishing a partnership;
- Useful template materials that can be tailored for local needs; and
- Examples of outreach and partnership materials.

What if I have questions about outreach and partnerships?

Go to the SNAP Web site at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/default.htm>. There you will find free materials, such as fliers, brochures, and radio and television public service announcements (PSAs) as well as general information about outreach and promising practices.

Learn from your colleagues by joining the Food Stamp Outreach Coalition, a nationwide network of advocacy groups and partner organizations that work to promote the health and nutrition benefits of SNAP. Formed in 2003, this core group of national food banks, community and faith-based groups, and service organizations work together to end hunger and improve nutrition.

For more information about the Coalition, please visit the Web site at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/about.htm>.

If you have other questions about outreach or this toolkit, please contact us at SNAPOUTREACH@fns.usda.gov.

What are the steps for developing and maintaining a partnership?

It is important to establish a framework and timeline for your partnership. The following 10 steps can help you establish a plan or respond to requests from other groups who want to discuss partnership opportunities:

10 Steps To Developing And Maintaining Partnerships

1. Meet local SNAP office employees
2. Select a target audience
3. Determine which partners will effectively reach your target audience
4. Research, develop needs assessment and prepare accordingly
5. Contact your prospective partners
6. Jointly establish your outreach plan
7. Confirm partnership roles and responsibilities
8. Stay in touch with your partners
9. Evaluate your partnership and effectiveness of outreach efforts
10. Share your successes

Step 1 Meet Local Snap Office

One of your most important partners is your local SNAP office. You may need to work through these 10 steps with your local SNAP office even before you work through them with other potential partners. It is important to keep the SNAP office informed and updated as you move forward with your plans with other partners.

There are several important reasons to inform your local office at an early stage in your planning:

- Possible funding opportunities through the State outreach plan. Provide the local office with outreach plan information, if needed, and give them time to check to see if the [State has a plan](#). If there is a plan, you may want to explore how your organization can be included in the plan.
- A local SNAP office may participate in a community/county board, task force, coalition or be working with contractors/grantees on nutrition education or outreach efforts.
- Only a local SNAP office can certify applicants for the Program. Local offices need to know your plans so employees can be informed about the project, plan for an increase in calls or applications, or help with evaluation.
- Customer service at local offices is critical to the success of your project. The local office may need time to implement new customer service procedures (e.g., arranging for more phone or email coverage or assigning more workers to intake) before the campaign is launched. To be successful, work together to make sure there are no customer service barriers when applicants contact the local office.
- The local office may need to review outreach activities already in place at the county and State level, as well as State policies on specific aspects of partnership.

- The local or State office can also provide or help you obtain a wealth of information, including:
 - Data on underserved populations in your community;
 - Updates on outreach activities already being conducted so you can enhance current efforts and avoid duplication of work;
 - Information on other organizations they routinely work with;
 - Information about local office services such as business hours, locations, off-site schedules, and phone numbers. This is important because some local offices may have multiple offices or may visit or have employees stationed at partner sites;
 - Application forms, informational materials, papers, or links to prescreening tools, or links to Web-based application forms;
 - Assistance with tracking and administrative data (this is especially important in evaluating the effectiveness of your efforts); and,
 - Assistance in training your employees, partners, or volunteers.

Step 2 Select A Target Audience

Decide which populations you want to reach through your outreach activities. National SNAP data shows that the most hard-to-reach and underserved populations are seniors (age 60 and older), immigrants, and the working poor. However, the target audience for your community may be different.

For example, your community may have a large number of homeless individuals, veterans, or recently unemployed individuals. By developing partnerships early, you can complete or update a community needs assessment to discuss:

- Which populations in your community tend to be underserved, where they tend to congregate, and which organizations are trusted.
- Materials available to reach your audience. This could be an opportunity to co-brand materials.
- Your local SNAP office or other organizations may know about other campaigns that are occurring.

Step 3 Choose Partners

To decide whom to choose as partners, brainstorm and make a list of organizations that your target audience trusts and whose services they regularly use. Seek advice from others:

- Ask the local SNAP office what organizations they work with and are trusted by their clients.
- Consult with the SNAP office on whether there is a State outreach plan. Also, ask local offices what types of outreach they conduct (e.g., local office may visit a senior center monthly to interview and accept application forms).
- Ask staff in your office which organizations they work with on a regular basis.
- Take advantage of any advisory groups, county boards, or task forces that work with your organization to determine how best to reach the target group.
- Ask existing partners for input about other groups that might be interested in this outreach effort.
- Ask your customers for the names of groups or channels they regularly go to for information.

See page [11](#) for a list of potential partners.

Special Consideration For Business Partners

Although local businesses have a genuine interest in helping out the needy in their community and will most likely have a formal community relations staff member, they also are driven by profit motivation and will have to think about their bottom line. If you plan to approach a local business or retailer about partnership, you may have to emphasize the [economic arguments](#) for participation in your project.

(See “[Introduction](#)” section for SNAP fact sheet.) Be sure you can tell retailers how SNAP participation helps their business thrive. Be sure you can tell employers how participation in SNAP will help their employees. Be prepared to discuss any public relations concerns and, if necessary, help them frame their messaging.

See pages [12-13](#) for a list of activities for outreach partnerships.

Step 4 Research

Research And Get Prepared

Increase your chances of success by being prepared before you contact your prospective partner.

Research

Take time to learn if there is a community needs assessment. You may start with the local SNAP office to see if there is an outreach plan in place. You may also consult with other outreach providers, organizations, public officials, or advocates. If there is no existing needs assessment, you may want to host a meeting to get one started. If there is an assessment place, review it and see if any adjustments are needed.

Also, learn as much as you can about prospective partners. Make sure you understand the role the organization plays in the community and whom the organization serves. These are some ways you can do this:

- Ask others in your office what they know about the prospective partner.
- Ask if anyone in your office has the name of a contact.
- Study the organization's Web site.

Get Prepared

Collect your ideas. Be prepared for questions your partner may ask. Be sure you can:

- Provide a brief overview of your organization.
- For community partners, promote the health and [economic benefits](#) of SNAP.
- Present the partnership as a “win-win” situation for all parties.
- Explain the role partners can play to assist potentially eligible people in accessing SNAP.
- If the SNAP office is one of your partners, explain the role the local office plays in your project.
- Discuss the importance of the project and the benefits of working with your organization. Explain how you can help their customers learn about and apply for SNAP benefits.



Tips & Tools

A community needs assessment can help your organization learn about other organizations who are targeting your audience.

Discussions may lead to ideas that can save your organization dollars (e.g., developing and printing a combined brochure or multiple program outreach efforts.)

Step 5 Contact Potential Partners

As you approach potential partners, remember that enthusiasm goes a long way. But if a potential partner says no to your ideas, don't get discouraged. Your ideas might not fit into their schedule right now, but they may be willing to revisit the discussion at a later date. In the meantime, there will be other partnership opportunities. Try the next organization on your list.

Call

Ask people in your organization for a contact name. If no one has a contact name, check out the Web site. Call the potential partner to start the ball rolling and gauge their interest. Here are some tips for making this initial call:

- Practice your talking points in advance. Do this regardless of whether you are talking to an acquaintance or someone you don't know. (See the "[Media Outreach](#)" section for a pitch script.)
- Don't just read directly from the script; personalize and use a conversational tone.
- Be respectful of your contact's time; ask if it is a good time for a conversation. Often these calls are best if they are pre-scheduled.
- Offer to schedule an appointment to conduct a meeting in person.
- Invite them to your offices for a tour and a brief overview of your proposed project.

Write

If you can't reach your contact by phone, send an email or letter. Here are some tips on composing your email or letter:

- Personalize and localize the information as much as possible. Your partner will want to know why you selected their group and what role you will want them to play in the project. (Sample partner letter is at the end of this chapter)
- Provide statistics on why outreach should be conducted in your community.
- Keep the letter short and to the point.
- Proofread your letter before sending it out.
- Promise to follow up. Don't wait for a call. Post a reminder on your calendar and call back in a few days.

Meet

If you have scheduled a meeting with your partners, here are some helpful tips for a successful meeting:

- Confirm the meeting date, time, and any equipment a day or two before the scheduled meeting.
- Send an agenda and some informational materials by email or mail before the meeting. Include a list of meeting participants.
- Tailor your presentation to your audience. Take along materials from this toolkit or your agency that are appropriate to your audience, and leave materials for the partner to review after the meeting.
- Provide your partners with information about the nutrition and economic benefits of SNAP. If you are talking with a local SNAP office, discuss how your organization will conduct prescreening or provide application assistance, and how they will submit the application forms. Clear procedures are needed to protect the date the application was filed.
- Specify your role in this project.
- Be clear and direct about how you would like them to be involved and what they can expect in return.
- Be clear on funding. If there is no funding available, be sure that is understood. You may also want to discuss [State outreach plans](#) and the process to obtain funding.
- Bring your partnership ideas to the table.
- Listen to the ideas your future partners have.
- Look professional, be on time, and be respectful of their time.

Step 6 Establish Your Strategy

Once you and your partner have agreed to work together, take some time to jointly establish a plan for your outreach. Discuss your goals and the strategies or activities you will use to reach those goals.

Examples of Outreach Goals

- Educate people about the nutrition and economic benefits of SNAP (e.g., presentations, distribution of materials, public service announcements, promotion of EBT card, etc.)
- Increase the number of organizations that invite local SNAP offices to their facilities for presentations, application assistance, or certification interviews. Increase the number of application forms distributed at locations such as food banks, health centers, retail stores, unemployment offices, and technical colleges.
- Increase the number of individuals prescreened for SNAP benefits at partner organizations.
- Increase the number of callers to a local/State toll-free number. You may wish to check out the local 211 number.
- Increase media coverage about the benefits of SNAP participation.
- Increase the number of visitors to a local Web site that contains community resources or other information.
- Increase the number of locations offering extended day and weekend SNAP application assistance.

You will also want to discuss the following issues with your new partner:

- How many people do you want to reach?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of each partner?
- How will funding be handled? Will Federal reimbursement be acquired through the State outreach plan or a grant?
- How will you evaluate your work and determine success?
- How will problems and disputes be identified and resolved?

Step 7 Confirm Responsibilities

Confirm your partnership arrangements in writing by sending a letter to your new partner(s). If the partnership is straightforward, this document can be simple. Just list the details of the partnership. You may want to include a summary of the role and responsibilities of each partner. A partner agreement letter template is at the end of this chapter.



Using Volunteers

Volunteers are enthusiastic and eager to help. If your plan calls for the use of volunteers, be sure you discuss these issues with your partner as well:

- How will you train volunteers to let them know what they can and can't do? For example, they can schedule appointments and fill out application forms, and obtain verification documents, but they cannot certify households for SNAP benefits.
- How will you educate volunteers about SNAP?
- How will you handle volunteer turnover?
- How will you thank your volunteers?
- How will you ensure client confidentiality?

Step 8 Stay In Touch

Once your partnership is established and outreach is underway, keep your partners informed and involved. It is especially important to keep the local SNAP office informed of your work. Give them advance notice of, and invite them to, any events or special projects that you host.

Here are some suggestions to help maintain your partnership:

- Update your partners on activities. Be sure to call or meet periodically to check in on how things are going, identify challenges, and share best practices.
- Send periodic "thank you" notes to partners and volunteers including local office workers. Let them know how many new people are getting the benefits of SNAP as a result of their efforts.
- Offer to include your partners in promotional activities, such as a newsletter or an event.



Establishing and Maintaining a Strong Partnership

Present the partnership as a "win-win" situation for all parties. Emphasize the positive local economic impact of increased participation.

- Agree on goals and objectives.
- Develop clearly defined roles and responsibilities.
- Practice clear and frequent communications.
- Show appreciation through recognition.

Step 9 Evaluate Your Partnerships

Although partnerships can be time-consuming, they can also be a valuable part of your work. It is important to track the value of these collaborations so that you can determine if you met your goals and what did and didn't work. You can use either process measures, outcome measures, or both, depending on the nature of your partnership.

Partnership Process Measures

- Has the number of partnerships increased since you began your alliance-building program? If not, why?
- When you established your partnerships, you began with a clear list of expectations. Are those expectations being met? If not, why?
- Do staff who are working on the partnerships feel it is proceeding well? What could be done differently?
- Do your partners approach you with new and creative ideas for working together?
- How are those suggestions addressed?
- Have your partners provided you with new information and expertise?
- Have you integrated these ideas into your outreach efforts?

Partnership Outcome Measures

- Have you seen an increase in calls to your local number? How did people learn of the number? What information are callers requesting?
- When clients call or visit the local SNAP office, are they asked how they learned about SNAP? Was it from your outreach effort? If these clients were a part of your project, does the local office staff think they are better prepared (for instance, form filled out and verification documents in hand) for the certification interview?
- Work with the local SNAP office to assign a code (such as a color, label, or number) for your organization that is placed on all applications that you distribute. Ask the local office if they can track this information and report back to you, or provide you with the technology to track these cases yourself.
- Has your ability to reach the target audience improved? Have more people from the target audience called or come into your office or visited the local SNAP office as a result of a partnership? Has participation increased? If not, why?
- If you host an event, such as prescreening at a grocery store, track the number of people in attendance and the number of applicants prescreened for SNAP benefits. Don't just prescreen, help people gather the information needed for the certification interview.
- Follow up with the local office to determine how many of the applications your organization submitted were approved or denied benefits. If possible, try to obtain reasons for denial. This can help you assess your training program. If approved, try to get the benefit amount to help you demonstrate the economic benefit to your community.
- If informational materials were distributed, track what materials were used and how many were given out.
- Did your partner help generate media coverage that increases the awareness of SNAP benefits? Keep track of the media clips.

Step 10 Share Your Success

Once you demonstrate success, share it! By sharing your outreach and partnership successes, other organizations will clearly see the value and benefits of joining in the outreach effort. You can:

- Mention your current partners when presenting or attending meetings and conferences.
- Write up your success and [submit](#) it on SNAP's [Promising Outreach Practices](#) Web page.
- Nominate your local office as a [Hunger Champion](#).
- Submit editorials to local newspapers, participate in other media campaigns and draft articles for inclusion in newsletters.

Potential Partners

Community Service Groups

- Food banks and pantries
- Community action agencies
- Homeless shelters and soup kitchens
- Family support centers (e.g., day care, domestic violence shelters, literacy, utility assistance programs)
- Legal Aid
- Salvation Army
- Goodwill
- Voluntary Income Tax Assistance (VITA) locations

Faith-Based Organizations

- Churches
- Temples
- Mosques
- Synagogues

City, County, State, Or Federal Government

- Local SNAP offices
- Local health department
- Employment assistance offices, including one-stop career centers
- Schools and technical colleges
- Department of Motor Vehicles
- Property tax offices
- Mayor or city or county officials
- Housing projects
- Federal agencies (for prisoners with imminent release)
- Local Social Security office
- Local military bases or installations
- Local or regional IRS offices

Business And Labor

- Employers
- Grocery stores
- Local unions
- Transit providers
- Utility companies

Medical Community

- Doctors
- Hospitals
- Pharmacies
- Community Health Centers
- Medicaid offices
- WIC offices

Seniors' Groups

- Assisted living facilities
- Area Agencies on Aging
- AARP Foundation chapters
- Meals-on-Wheels program

Immigrant Groups

- Local consulates
- Clubes de Oriundos
- Immigrant service organizations (e.g., the Michoacan Federation, Lao American Community Service)

Media Organizations

- Radio
- TV
- Newspapers
- Internet
- Blogs
- Twitter
- Facebook
- YouTube

Activities For Potential Outreach Partnerships

Community groups/agencies/other organizations can:

- Conduct SNAP eligibility prescreenings.
- Provide application assistance. Distribute SNAP application forms and help potential clients fill out the forms. Explain to potential applicants what types of information and documentation the local SNAP office will need in order to complete the application process. Outreach providers may assist applicants in collecting the documents and provide translation services, when appropriate.
- Include information about the nutrition and health benefits of SNAP in newsletters or other local outreach materials.
- Display posters or fliers in lobbies, waiting areas, employee break areas, health clinic checkout areas, nutrition education rooms, etc. Local informational materials may be posted to show where/when outreach workers will be available to assist potential applicants.
- Post information on Web site and link to Step 1, the FNS eligibility prescreening tool.
- Provide SNAP information or giveaways at community events such as health or county fairs.
- Host a “nutrition/health fair” to promote SNAP benefits.

Retailers/grocers can:

- Play PSAs on in-store radio.
- Include fliers and brochures in mailings and weekly circulars.
- Include SNAP benefit information on store receipts and in grocery bags.
- Print SNAP information on grocery bags. Make it lively—a grocery bag image containing the national toll-free number is available from USDA. Advertise SNAP information on grocery carts.
- Design, produce, and post promotional materials about SNAP benefits in the store — posters, banners, floor graphics, recipe cards, etc.
- Provide SNAP information in the checkout display area.
- Underwrite paid advertising on local media.
- Underwrite printing of [outreach](#) materials.
- Allow eligibility prescreening to be conducted in the store or outside of it.
- Underwrite the hiring of outreach workers in partner agencies.
- Underwrite the salary of an outstationed eligibility worker.
- Underwrite a mobile office to conduct application assistance at all of their stores in a State or region.

Activities For Potential Outreach Partnerships

Pharmacies can:

- Include SNAP information on the patient information form that is stapled to prescription drugs.
- Include information in circulars.
- Air PSAs on in-store radio.
- Advertise SNAP information on shopping carts.
- Post information on pharmacy Web sites.
- Encourage sponsorship of health fairs where prescreening for benefits can take place.
- Allow outreach and application assistance in stores.

Employers can:

- Include SNAP information in new employee packets, newsletters, job training programs, etc.
- Put a notice about a local or national toll-free number on paycheck stubs.
- Make periodic announcements about SNAP over the intercom system.
- Post SNAP information on bulletin boards.
- Invite outreach providers or SNAP workers onsite to discuss program requirements, conduct prescreenings or certification interviews.

Transit companies can:

- Provide free advertising space on bus shelters, buses, and subways/light rail.
- Include fliers and brochures in mailings.

Utility companies can:

- Put SNAP benefits information in newsletters.
- Print information on utility bills.
- Enclose insert along with invoice.
- Allow organizations to give out informational materials or prescreen and conduct application assistance for SNAP benefits onsite.

Media organizations can:

- Air [public service announcements \(PSAs\)](#). Provide a disc jockey or on-air celebrity to be the official spokesperson of your outreach effort, or make an appearance at community events, such as a “nutrition fair.”
- Serve as a media advisor to your outreach efforts.
- Introduce groups to local businesses who may be interested in funding newspaper, radio, or TV ads.
- Obtain celebrity endorsers of SNAP outreach.

Get Involved!

Partners With A Common Goal

Community and faith-based groups, retailers, and anti-hunger advocacy groups across the country have a common goal to reduce hunger, improve nutrition, and increase economic activity.

Strength In Numbers

By coming together in partnership, we can advance our efforts to inform individuals and families in our communities about SNAP, ensuring that everyone can eat right, even when money's tight.

Raising Awareness

There are a number of ways you can help inform members of your community about the nutrition benefits of SNAP.

Ways To Inform Members Of Your Community

- Order and hang free fliers on bulletin boards in offices, lobbies, or lunch/break rooms.
- Provide free SNAP resources including USDA's free tri-fold brochures and bookmarks (available in English and Spanish) for waiting rooms, health fairs, libraries, and community centers.
- Insert free SNAP materials in grocery bags, informational packets, new employee materials, etc.
- Include the SNAP toll-free number or Web site (www.fns.usda.gov/snap) on promotional pieces such as posters, fliers, milk or egg cartons, paper or plastic bags, store receipts, and in-store displays.
- Include information about Step 1, SNAP's online prescreening tool and application assistance in promotional pieces or make arrangements with employers or senior groups to allow individuals to use the prescreening tool to learn about their possible eligibility for SNAP benefits.
- Publish an article about the nutrition benefits of SNAP in your employee or group newsletters and magazines.
- Broadcast SNAP [public service announcements \(PSAs\)](#) at your store or company or use your contacts to get donated time at radio stations.
- Add a link to www.usda.gov/snap from your Web page.
- Host a special SNAP prescreening event, cooking demonstration, or information fair.
- Volunteer at an activity to raise awareness about SNAP (options could include helping at a food pantry or food bank, soup kitchen, or prescreening event).
- Subscribe to the [SNAP Outreach Coalition listserv](#) and learn about other outreach efforts taking place across the country.
- Encourage the use of online application tools, where appropriate.

10 Ideas for Retailer SNAP Outreach

Help your customers learn about the nutrition benefits of SNAP.

SNAP benefits bring Federal funds into your community that can increase sales at your store and act as an immediate economic stimulus. With SNAP benefits, your low-income customers can purchase more healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables, whole-grain foods, and dairy products. This increases total economic activity in your community by freeing up family budgets to make additional purchases which in turn increase productivity and demand. For every \$5.00 redeemed in SNAP benefits, as much as \$9.20 in additional economic activity is generated. As a retailer, you can:

1. **DISPLAY** SNAP posters, fliers, magnets, and other materials. Go to <http://snap.ntis.gov> for free USDA materials and promotional items.
2. **FORM** partnerships with local groups such as food banks, anti-hunger groups, or other community or faith-based groups and invite them to staff an information table to give out SNAP information or prescreen customers for eligibility and conduct application assistance. Also, host nutritious food tastings or cooking demonstrations. Give out recipe cards that contain nutrition information and the national or local SNAP toll-free number.
3. **PUT** SNAP information, such as national or local SNAP toll-free numbers, on grocery bags and in weekly circulars and bulletins.
4. **PUBLISH** SNAP materials in languages spoken in your community.
5. **PRINT** SNAP promotional messages on store receipts.
6. **BROADCAST** SNAP public service announcements in the store.
7. **EDUCATE** cashiers about the benefits of SNAP.
8. **ENCOURAGE** EBT processors to add recorded messages to help-desk numbers promoting the nutrition benefits of SNAP and encouraging SNAP clients to “tell a friend.”
9. **UNDERWRITE** the cost of outreach worker salaries at partner agencies.
10. **UNDERWRITE** the salary of an outstationed SNAP eligibility worker.

The Benefits of SNAP

The Program Helps Low-Income Families:

- Stretch food dollars. Those receiving SNAP benefits spend more money on food than other low-income households.
- Fight obesity through education. Nutrition educators teach SNAP participants the importance of a quality diet, how to prepare healthy low-cost meals, and how to make healthy choices.
- Put more food on the table for their children. SNAP benefits are an investment in our future.
- Keep older adult family members independent. For seniors, participation can help improve nutrition status and overall health, and increase independence.
- Transition to self-sufficiency. SNAP helps participants become financially stable and provides needed support as they transition to self-sufficiency. Half of all new participants leave the program within nine months.



Tips & Tools

Within your community, there may be a host of potential partners interested in joining your effort to boost SNAP enrollment and inform people of the nutrition benefits of the program. Retailers, businesses, community-based organizations, and government entities can all play a vital role in SNAP outreach.

The Program Helps States and Local Economies By:

- Supporting local food retailers.
- Every \$5 in new SNAP benefits generates as much as \$9.20 in economic activity.
- Supporting [farmers](#).
- Leveraging Federal funds. SNAP benefits are Federal funds. By partnering with FNS and increasing the number of people in SNAP, States can bring Federal money into their States and communities.

The Program Helps Businesses and Workers:

- Achieve optimal performance. Employees whose food needs are met at home may have higher productivity and take fewer sick days for themselves and their children.
- Attain self-sufficiency. SNAP benefits supplement the food budgets of low-income workers so they can stay independent, work toward self-sufficiency and purchase additional household necessities.

Partner Letter Template

[DATE]

[NAME]

[TITLE]

[BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION]

[ADDRESS]

[CITY], [STATE] [ZIP CODE]

Dear Mr./Ms. [NAME]:

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the first line of defense against hunger. On behalf of [ORGANIZATION NAME], I am writing to invite you to lend your support to [STATE/CITY/TOWN'S] SNAP outreach effort by *[Describe the request — an activity you would like the organization to participate in, such as: hosting a health fair or prescreening event; volunteering; distributing informational flyers; promoting events; etc.]*.

The goal of this outreach effort is to ensure that everyone who is eligible for SNAP knows about the program and is able to access benefits. Our organization is helping to promote the nutrition benefits of SNAP.

[Provide local information on what your organization is doing, who you plan to target in your campaign, and the need in your community (number of potentially eligible individuals that are not being served for this type of effort.)]

We hope you will join us in supporting [ORGANIZATION or COALITION NAME's] outreach efforts; we would be honored to work with you. With your support, we are confident that we can reach more of [CITY/STATE's] individuals and families not yet enrolled in SNAP. By participating, *[List benefits to organization such as: reinforces position as community leader; provides opportunity for positive media exposure; offers community service opportunities; etc.]*.

I will contact you in the next few days to further discuss the vital role you can play in helping our community. In the meantime, feel free to contact me at [PHONE NUMBER] should you have any questions. I have also enclosed additional information on SNAP benefits for your review.

Again, we hope you can join us in supporting this important effort, and look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

[NAME]

[TITLE]

Partnership Agreement Letter Template

[DATE]

[NAME]

[TITLE]

[BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION]

[ADDRESS]

[CITY], [STATE] [ZIP CODE]

Dear Mr./Ms. [NAME]:

Thank you so much for agreeing to partner with [NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION] to help us reach those low-income individuals and families in our community who can benefit from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Our partnership is part of a larger national effort to ensure that everyone who is eligible for SNAP benefits receives them.

Below is an outline of the partnership specifics we discussed:

(Partner to gain inclusion in the State's SNAP outreach plan and leverage federal reimbursement for SNAP outreach activities.)

In-Kind Donations

- Financial contribution for production of materials such as pamphlets, bus/subway ads, bus/subway shelter ads, pot holders, recipe cards, application assistance, other giveaways, etc.
- In-store space to conduct nutrition events, pre-screenings, etc.
- Placement of PSA or donated print advertisement space, etc.
- Personnel support to help fill out SNAP application forms, obtain verification documents, submit completed applications on behalf of clients, etc.

Promotional Opportunities

- Appearance of company name in SNAP media materials.
- Visibility in Advertising, Media and Event Signage
- Your company's logo on SNAP signage and in outreach materials.
- Opportunity for a company representative to attend/participate at event(s).

We're so glad you see the value of partnering on such an important outreach effort. Please feel free to call me at [PHONE NUMBER] with any questions. Thank you once again.

Sincerely,

[NAME]

[TITLE]



Tips & Tools

How can I initiate a partnership? If a relationship is not currently in place, a good way to initiate a partnership is by sending a letter to a community relations, marketing, or communications contact. Your letter should outline your outreach effort, provide background information on your organization and SNAP, and describe the nature of your partnership request. This is a template letter that you can use with your own letterhead.

Media Events

When is a media event or press conference appropriate?

Media events or press conferences are used to convey information and attract attention. They allow you to deliver time-sensitive news to many media outlets at once. Because events involve a lot of time, and because attendance and coverage aren't guaranteed, think carefully before you make a decision to move forward.

What should I consider when deciding whether a media event is warranted?

- Is there a visual element to your news? Keep in mind what will look good in a photo or on TV.
- Is there an alternative format to deliver your news that would be equally or more effective, such as a press release? Is your event newsworthy, timely, and of interest to the media? (See "Five Components of a Newsworthy Story" in the [Media Outreach](#) section.)
- Will an event offer reporters special advantages, such as contact with experts, officials, and other important local figures?

What are some examples of things that might warrant an event or press conference?

- Formation of new and important partnerships;
- Opening of a new facility;
- Announcement of a new program;
- Release of an important study or survey; or
- Announcement of the receipt of a new grant.

At what time should I plan the media event?

Check your local calendar listings before planning an event to make sure it doesn't conflict with another major media event. The optimal time to schedule a media event or news conference is 10 a.m. This allows time in the morning for the assignment editor to review the story options for the day and to assign a reporter to your event. Remember, TV and radio producers need time to edit the story for broadcast, and newspaper reporters need time to write.

Consider also that your event might be more successful at certain times of the year, for instance when school's out and children no longer have access to a school lunch program, or around the holidays when people are sensitive to hunger issues.

Where should I have the media event?

The location of your event should be relevant to the issue or story being presented. Hold your event in a central location, near the media, to help facilitate coverage. Take the time to scout your location before you choose it, and visit it a few times again before you host your event. Make sure there is nearby parking for news vans, as crews often carry heavy equipment to and from the event site.

Anticipate what equipment will be necessary and make sure there is adequate space for equipment at your location. If you expect cameras or radio reporters, you must have a podium and microphone. In many cases, television and radio reporters tape their own microphones directly on to the podium. Be sure there is room for a table for press releases, statements, and check-in.

- **Outdoor events:** Consider the weather and noise, and arrange for an alternate indoor site.
- **Indoor events:** Think about space. You will need room for TV cameras and other media, guests, and your own audiovisual equipment. Know beforehand where electrical plugs and light switches are located.

Whom should I invite?

Consider inviting community leaders, including the mayor, local council members, or notable nutritionists to speak at a news conference. Work with your local SNAP office to select speakers and develop the invitation list. Not only will this make your event more appealing to the media, but it demonstrates that improving nutrition in your area is a community effort.

The media usually take an interest in the human side of an issue. See if you can identify a family that has a positive story to tell about its experience with SNAP.

How should I invite the media?

The most common way to invite media to a press conference is with a media advisory. The advisory gives enough details about the event to pique an outlet's interest, but not so many that it gives away the entire story.

Send your advisory to the assignment editor or reporter one to two days before your event. On the morning of your event, follow up with the reporter or assignment editor and be sure to include on-site contact information, such as cell phone numbers and exact site location. Assignment desks often do not know whom they will send until the day of the event.

What else do I need to do in advance?

- **Prepare signage** such as banners and podium signs that can be placed prominently in front of the cameras and photographers. Be sure to properly position signage (you do not want it blocked by speakers, equipment, etc.).
- **Spokesperson(s)** Assign one or two spokespeople, such as the head of your organization or a local dignitary, to speak and/or answer media questions at the event. Brief your spokespeople beforehand and make sure they are approved to speak in front of the press. In addition to having official spokespeople, the media will be attracted to a story that puts a human face on the issue of hunger. Because some people may not want others to know they are using SNAP benefits, approach this issue with sensitivity and prudence. Be sure all your spokespersons speak clearly and are easily understood.
- **Prepare an agenda.** Decide the order of the speakers, the length of their remarks, and who will act as master of ceremonies. Keep each person's remarks to no more than 10 minutes and plan on having no more than three speakers.
- **Prepare your press kits.** Include the following in your press kit:
 - Agenda
 - Fact sheet
 - Bios of speakers and interviewees
 - Copies of any graphs, charts, and other visuals
 - Photographs
 - Brochures
- **List your event in your local community calendars.** Larger cities also have a local Associated Press (AP) office that you can call. Ask to have your event put on their calendar, known as the Daybook. There is a State-by-State listing of AP bureaus at the end of this section.
- **Call the press** as a reminder prior to the day of the event.

What should I do on the day of the event?

- Set up a table for media and guest sign-in and press kit distribution.
- Greet the guests as they arrive and provide them with assigned seating and other pertinent information.
- Start on time, even if attendance is sparse.

What should I do after the event?

- Send thank-you notes or letters to the guests and special speakers.
- Follow up with media who were not able to attend — ASAP. Send press kits to reporters who couldn't attend the event. Place follow up calls and ask reporters if they are interested in conducting a phone interview with one of the spokespeople.
- Monitor and collect news articles



Examples of Visuals

Informational Visuals

Pie charts and graphs from new research, such as charts that show the number of people in your area who are eligible for SNAP benefits, but not receiving them.

Backdrop, like a large sign with the organization name; or the backdrop might be something that conveys information — like shelves of food at a food bank

Symbolic Visual

A table display of healthy foods to demonstrate the foods that a family of four could buy with SNAP benefits in a month.

What are some examples of events I could host?

Here are some examples of events to generate coverage of hunger issues and SNAP benefits, as well as simple, inexpensive visuals to use, and spokespeople to offer for interviews.

Announcement of New Study Findings

LOCATION: A community center, community or faith-based organization, food bank

INTERVIEWEES: Head of your organization, mayor, council members, nutritionist, recipients of SNAP benefits

VISUALS: Graphs and charts, key findings one-pager

A “Day In The Life” Grocery Shopping

LOCATION: A supermarket. The idea would be to have local media person “shop” for a family of four with a limited budget so they can understand what it is like to buy nutritious food when money’s tight.

INTERVIEWEES: Recipients of SNAP benefits, grocery store manager, nutritionist

VISUALS: Healthy food, use of the EBT card

Cooking Demonstration For Recipients Of Snap Benefits

LOCATION: A food bank, culinary school, kitchens at schools, faith-based or community center, supermarket

INTERVIEWEES: A nutritionist, recipients of SNAP benefits, a local dignitary, a chef from a well-known local restaurant

VISUALS: Good, healthy food being prepared, a nutrition chart, images of people learning about how to eat well and economically, recipe cards

Associated Press (AP): State-by-State Listing

State	City	Phone	State	City	Phone
AK	Anchorage	(907) 272-7549	MT	Helena	(406) 442-7440
AL	Montgomery	(334) 262-5947	NC	Raleigh	(919) 833-8687
AR	Little Rock	(501) 225-3668	ND	Bismarck	(701) 223-8450
AZ	Phoenix	(602) 258-8934	NE	Omaha	(402) 391-0031
CA	Los Angeles	(213) 626-1200	NH	Concord	(603) 224-3327
CO	Denver	(303) 825-0123	NJ	Trenton	(609) 392-3622
CT	Hartford	(860) 246-6876	NM	Albuquerque	(505) 822-9022
DC	Washington	(202) 776-9400	NV	Las Vegas	(702) 382-7440
DE	Dover	(302) 674-3037	NY	New York	(212) 621-1670
FL	Miami	(305) 594-5825	OH	Columbus	(614) 885-2727
GA	Atlanta	(404) 522-8971	OK	Oklahoma	(405) 525-2121
HI	Honolulu	(808) 536-5510	OR	Portland	(503) 228-2169
IA	Des Moines	(515) 243-3281	PA	Philadelphia	(215) 561-1133
ID	Boise	(208) 343-1894	RI	Providence	(401) 274-2270
IL	Chicago	(312) 781-0500	SC	Columbia	(803) 799-6418
IN	Indianapolis	(317) 639-5501	SD	Sioux Falls	(605) 332-3111
KS	Topeka	(785) 234-5654	TN	Nashville	(615) 373-9988
KY	Louisville	(502) 583-7718	TX	Dallas	(972) 991-2100
LA	New Orleans	(504) 523-3931	UT	Salt Lake City	(801) 322-3405
MA	Boston	(617) 357-8100	VA	Richmond	(804) 643-6646
MD	Baltimore	(410) 837-8315	VT	Montpelier	(802) 229-0577
ME	Portland	(207) 772-4157	WA	Seattle	(206) 682-1812
MI	Detroit	(313) 259-0650	WI	Milwaukee	(414) 225-3580
MN	Minneapolis	(612) 332-2727	WV	Charleston	(304) 346-0897
MO	St. Louis	(314) 241-2496	WY	Cheyenne	(307) 632-9351
MS	Jackson	(601) 948-5897			

Regional/State Radio Networks

Organization	City	State	Phone	Fax	Main E-mail
Alaska Public Radio Network	Anchorage	AK	(907) 263-7448	N/A	news@aprn.org
Alabama Radio Network	Birmingham	AL	(205) 439-9600	(205) 439-8390	N/A
Arkansas Radio Network	Little Rock	AR	(501) 401-0200	(501) 401-0367	N/A
Pacifica Radio Network	Berkeley	CA	(510) 849-2281	N/A	contact@pacifica.org
Connecticut Radio Network	Hamden	CT	(203) 288-2002	(203) 281-3291	N/A
Florida's Radio Networks	Maitland	FL	(888) 407-4376	(407) 916-7425	news@frn.com
Georgia News Network	Atlanta	GA	(404) 607-9045	(404) 367-1134	N/A
Radio Iowa	Des Moines	IA	(515) 282-1984	(515) 282-1879	Radiolowa@Learfield.com
Illinois Radio Network	Chicago	IL	(312) 943-6363	(312) 943-5109	N/A
Network Indiana	Indianapolis	IN	(317) 637-4638	(317) 684-2008	info@network-indiana.com
Kansas Information Network	Topeka	KS	(785) 272-2199	(785) 228-7282	info@radionetworks.com
Kentucky News Network	Louisville	KY	(502) 479-2222	(502) 479-2231	N/A
Louisiana Network, Inc.	Baton Rouge	LA	(225) 383-8695	(225) 383-5020	N/A
National Radio Network	Framingham	MA	(508) 820-2430	N/A	N/A
Michigan Radio Network	Lansing	MI	(517) 484-4888	(517) 484-1389	miradio@ameritech.net
Minnesota News Network	Minneapolis	MN	(612) 321-7200	(612) 321-7202	newsroom@mnnradio.com
MissouriNet	Jefferson City	MO	(573) 893-2829	(573) 893-8094	Info@Missourinet.com
Mississippi News Network	Jackson	MS	(601) 957-1700	(601) 956-5228	N/A
Northern Broadcasting System	Billings	MT	(406) 252-6661	(406) 245-9755	nbs@northernbroadcasting.com
North Carolina News Network	Raleigh	NC	(919) 890-6030	(919) 890-6024	N/A
North Dakota News Network	Fargo	ND	(701) 237-5000	(701) 280-0861	dakotanews@qwest.net
Ohio News Network	Columbus	OH	(614) 460-3850	(614) 460-2822	N/A
Oklahoma News Network	Oklahoma City	OK	(405) 840-9489	(405) 858-1435	N/A
Radio Pennsylvania Network	Harrisburg	PA	(717) 221-2883	(717) 232-7612	radiopa@radiopa.org
South Carolina News Network	Columbia	SC	(803) 790-4300	(803) 790-4309	N/A
South Dakota News Network	Pierre	SD	(605) 224-9911	(605) 224-8984	dakotanews@qwest.net
Tennessee Radio Network	Nashville	TN	(615) 664-2400	(615) 687-9797	N/A
Texas State Network	Arlington	TX	(800) 683-5558	(817) 543-5572	tsn@tsnradio.com
Virginia News Networks	Richmond	VA	(804) 474-0000	(804) 474-0167	N/A
Wisconsin Radio Network	Madison	WI	(608) 251-3900	(608) 251-7233	info@wrn.com
West Virginia MetroNews	Charleston	WV	(304) 346-7055	(304) 346-8262	newsroom@wvmetronews.com
United Stations Radio Network	New York	NY	(212) 869-1111	(212) 869-1115	info@unitedstations.com
USA Radio Network	Dallas	TX	(972) 484-3900	(972) 241-6826	newsroom@usaradio.com

Paid Advertising

What is paid advertising?

Paid advertising, otherwise known as paid media, is the airing of campaign messages—or advertisements—by purchasing space in media outlets, such as television and radio stations, newspapers, magazines, Web sites, and outdoor billboards.

The overall goal of an advertising strategy is to reach your audience and change behavior or attitudes. Here are the principal steps to reach that goal:

1. Surround your target audience with specific and consistent messages (e.g., about the nutrition assistance SNAP can provide to low-income individuals and families).
2. Motivate your audience to get more information, such as by calling a phone number or visiting a Web site.

How does advertising differ from media relations?

- Advertising is repeating your messages a guaranteed number of times.
- Media relations is outreach. It can entail sending out press releases, media advisories, feature articles, and other information. The goal is to clearly state your case to interest media outlets in using the materials or asking you for more information.
- Messages acquired through media relations outreach are referred to as “earned” and add depth to your paid advertising efforts.

How many times must a person hear/see an advertisement in order to take action?

According to Roper Starch Worldwide research (2001), it takes:

- 3 to 4 impressions for a person to recognize that a message is an advertisement;
- 7 to 8 impressions for a person to remember the message; and
- 10 to 18 impressions for a person to change his or her attitude/behavior as a result of hearing or seeing an advertisement.

How are paid ads different from public service announcements?

Paid Advertising

- You pay the media outlet to air advertisements
- You select the best time of day, programs, and outlets to reach your target audience (market research and advertising professionals and media buyers can help)
- Ads have 100 percent guaranteed delivery and greater likelihood of reaching the target audience

Public Service Announcements

- The media outlet airs messages free of charge to benefit target audiences
- Because they are free, you have no control over the time of day or how often messages will run
- It is difficult to gauge success due to irregularity of airing

What are the best media outlets to use to reach low-income individuals and families?

There are many options when purchasing advertising, including radio, television, print, Internet, and outdoor. A review of your organization's available budget and a community needs assessment are the best ways to identify the best media for advertising.

RADIO

FNS has found radio to be the most cost-effective way to reach low-income populations. Research has shown that low-income individuals use radio more frequently than the general population. Stations can use both produced ads (ads that have already been recorded) or radio readers, which are messages that an announcer can read between songs or weather/traffic updates (less expensive).

TELEVISION

Network and cable television advertising are the most effective ways to reach low-income audiences. Depending on the market and available advertising space, television is often the most expensive advertising medium. However, school and community cable stations may be an option to consider, as they typically charge much less than commercial stations.

ETHNIC MEDIA

Ethnic media outlets, such as radio stations and local newspapers, are available in media markets that have large immigrant populations. These outlets tend to be cost-effective. Readers/listeners trust these more than traditional media outlets. Ethnic television stations and cable networks typically are less expensive than mainstream television, but their availability varies from market to market.

PRINT

Immigrants and seniors often read the local daily newspaper, as well as community daily or weekly newspapers, which are often free. By placing print advertisements in these newspapers, you can better reach low-income people ages 60 and older. These local papers are often willing to print drop-in feature articles free of charge, because they help develop content.

OUTDOOR

This form of advertising includes billboards and transit advertisements. Organizations targeting audiences in urban communities that have public transportation systems may want to consider placing outdoor advertising. Outdoor advertising is helpful in raising awareness, yet it is most effective when coupled with advertising in other media.

INTERNET

While Internet use among low-income working poor and seniors is on the rise, low-income populations are less likely to use the Internet than any other medium. However, many Web sites that accept online advertising offer the opportunity to target by ZIP code. In this way, you can make sure your advertising is seen by people who live in lower-income areas of your media market. Online advertising also provides a built-in evaluation mechanism. You can count click through rates to your Web site from the advertisement.

How do I develop or select advertisements?

When developing or selecting the advertisement you want to use in your paid outreach, it is critical that the ad:

- Clearly focuses on one single important message. For example, a spot can address the stigma of SNAP, or emphasize that, by using benefits from SNAP, people can purchase healthy foods such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- Includes a call to action—such as calling a 1-800 number. Your ad must motivate your target audience to do something.

For more information about message development, see the [Media Outreach](#) section.

Does FNS have paid advertising spots that I can use?

No. However, FNS has radio scripts posted at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/radio/default.htm>, which organizations can download and record using their own actors.

If your organization is interested in purchasing its own paid advertising on television or radio stations, in print outlets, online, or on billboards, you will need to develop your own ads.

If you are interested in conducting advertising, consider contacting FNS to obtain guidance on the process of developing and placing advertising.

How do I produce my own radio spot using USDA's existing scripts?

Organizations can use the existing radio scripts from USDA's Web site. You will need to work with a talent agency and recording studio, which will finalize the spot for use on radio stations.

Does FNS have recorded public service announcements that I can use?

Yes. FNS has produced radio public service announcements at this link:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/psas.htm>.

These spots cannot be used for paid advertising due to talent restrictions.



Tips to Make Your Own Radio Buys

Partnerships with one or more media outlets can help your organization get the deepest discounts—including additional bonus placements. Establish the partnership by:

- Scheduling an in-person meeting with the station manager, public service coordinator, and/or sales manager to explain the importance of nutrition assistance to the outlet's consumers.
- Prepare and present background information about your organization, your outreach, your target audience, and the public benefit for the media outlet representatives.
- If an in-person meeting cannot be scheduled, prepare a cover letter and mail an information packet to the sales manager and public service director. Be sure to follow up by calling the sales manager or public service director to discuss opportunities.

Ask media outlets what they can provide free of charge as a "bonus" for the amount of money you are paying for space.

More information about forming partnerships is located in [Partnerships](#) section.

5 Key Steps To Develop An Advertising Plan

Step 1 Determine Advertising

What type of paid advertising should you conduct? How much money is available to purchase paid advertising? What are the costs associated with developing, designing, or producing advertisements? For print and outdoor advertising, consider costs to develop, design, and/or print materials. For Web site advertising, consider costs of designing ads. If new radio or television scripts are needed, consider costs for script development, production, and talent. Don't forget that State agencies can receive reimbursement from FNS for approximately 50 percent of their administrative costs for outreach to low-income people. For more information, visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/guidance/stateplan.htm>



5 Key Steps To Develop An Advertising Plan

1. Determine Advertising
2. Identify Target Audience
3. Identify Target Area
4. Find a Partner Organization
5. Determine Outlets

Step 2 Identify Target Audience

Conduct research in your State or local area to determine which low-income people have not taken advantage of nutrition assistance. Seniors? Working families? Legal immigrants? Conduct a community needs assessment to determine to whom you should reach out.

Step 3 Identify Target Area

Consider advertising in one community or “media market,” one State, or multiple States, depending on your capacity. Review the FNS participation rates and demographic data at the Federal and State levels to determine where your target audience resides. Conduct a community needs assessment as described in [Media Outreach](#) section. For more information, visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/researchers/default.htm>

Step 4 Find a Partner Organization

Find other organizations at the State or local level with whom you can partner, including another nonprofit organization or for-profit corporation with which you can pool funds. Also consider a local media outlet that could give you free or discounted advertising space. For more information about partnerships, see the [Partnerships](#) section.

Step 5 Determine Outlets

Finally, identify the top media outlets that your target audience uses. Remember, if you have a limited media buying budget, aim for lower-cost advertising options, such as radio and ethnic media. The most effective media plan is one that not only gets your message to your target audience, but gets it there with sufficient repetition.

How should I time my advertisements?

During The Year

To increase the chance that your target audience will recognize, remember, and act on your messages, plan your advertising in conjunction with other outreach activities that are taking place. It is also a good idea to plan as far ahead as possible to negotiate the best rates with media outlets. In past years, FNS has aired radio advertisements in January and February, to coincide with cold-weather months and increased heating costs; and in mid-to-late spring, when parents begin worrying about feeding school-age children who qualify for free or reduced-price meals. However, there are certain times of the year that are more costly:

- The fall, during an election year, when candidates air lots of advertising. The amount of available space is limited and therefore more expensive.
- Winter holidays—from Thanksgiving through New Year's Day. The amount of available space is limited because of holiday advertising by businesses.
- Sweep periods during May and November. Networks typically schedule their best programs and run never-before-seen episodes of popular shows, which bring in more viewers.

During The Day

If you decide to purchase television and radio advertising, work with your media buying professional, media planner, or the stations to determine the best time of day to air the advertising. Ask outlets to provide research—in the form of data (not written analysis)—on the best times to reach the selected target audience and compare this information across stations.

Whom can I contact to find a local advertising agency?

Consult with your partners or contact your Chamber of Commerce to find a local advertising agency that can help.

What are some tips to negotiate and place advertising and to form partnerships?

A paid media plan requires extensive research and in-depth analysis of market conditions and unique viewing habits of each market. Depending on the size of your budget and the complexity of your outreach plan, you should consider hiring a media buying professional to place paid advertising. A media professional will:

- Tailor buys for various media markets within a State or throughout a region;
- Weigh markets based on the number of eligible nonparticipants; and
- Negotiate rates—discounted, free, and/or matching spots—to leverage the buy.

However, if your organization has limited funds, you may decide to place your own media buy.

Monitoring The Effectiveness of Advertising

How can I monitor the placements?

After placing a paid media buy, it is important to confirm that outlets aired your messages. Here are some tips to aid you in monitoring the placements:

Radio and Television Advertising

Request reports and invoices on how often and when the advertisements were played, and carefully review them to ensure the advertisements were placed according to the planned schedule.

Print Advertising

Request “tear sheets” or copies of the ad that ran in the publication. Your organization should obtain this information from every publication in which print ads were placed.

Online Banner Ads

Make sure to work with the designer of both banner ads and the Web site so that click-through rates and impressions are monitored from the advertising.

Outdoor Billboards and Transit Ads

Request a proof of performance after the campaign is over, which includes pictures and details about the campaign.

What should I do if my organization does not get the number of spots paid for or if the print outlet doesn't run the advertisement?

If in the course of monitoring your buy you learn that a radio or television station did not deliver the negotiated number of spots, or if a print outlet forgets to run an advertisement on a specific date, you should contact the outlet and ask it to “make good” on the original advertisement by running another in its place for no additional cost.

How can I measure effectiveness of advertising?

FNS has used a 1-800 number as its call to action in its SNAP National Media Campaign. In fact, FNS encourages partners to advertise a phone number rather than a Web site, as many low-income individuals and families do not use computers or have access to them.

To determine how effective paid advertising has been, organizations should compare the number of phone calls during advertising flights to the number of calls made during the same period in a previous year when no advertising ran. By doing so, organizations can determine how well the advertising has reached the target audience and revise future media plans accordingly.

Glossary Of Terms

Terms	Definition																		
Advertising	The airing of campaign messages, or advertisements, by purchasing space in media outlets.																		
Bonus/Value-Add	Additional air time or “free” placements that a media outlet will give an organization as a result of negotiation on the paid advertising.																		
Click-Through	The process of clicking on an online advertisement, which then takes you through to the advertiser’s destination, usually a Web site or landing page.																		
Click-Through Rate (CTR)	The average number of click-throughs per hundred ad impressions, expressed as a percentage.																		
Cost Per Point (CPP)	The cost to reach 1 percent (or one rating point) of the individuals in a specific market. The cost per point varies by market size, demand, and advertising content. Cost Per Point = Schedule Cost / Number of Gross Rating Points																		
Day Part	The time of day when a television or radio ad airs. <table> <tr> <th>Television</th><th>Radio</th></tr> <tr> <td>EM: Early Morning 5 a.m.–9 a.m.</td><td>PA: Prime Access 7 p.m.–8 p.m.</td></tr> <tr> <td>DT: Daytime 9 a.m.–3 p.m.</td><td>PT: Primetime 8 p.m.–11 p.m.</td></tr> <tr> <td>EF: Early Fringe 3 p.m.–5 p.m.</td><td>LN: Late News 11 p.m.–11:30 p.m.</td></tr> <tr> <td>EN: Early News 5 p.m.–7 p.m.</td><td>LF: Late Fringe 11:30 p.m.–2 a.m.</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>AM Drive: 5 a.m.–10 a.m.</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>Midday: 10 a.m.–3 p.m.</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>PM Drive: 3 p.m.–7 p.m.</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>Evenings: 7 p.m.–12 a.m.</td></tr> </table>	Television	Radio	EM: Early Morning 5 a.m.–9 a.m.	PA: Prime Access 7 p.m.–8 p.m.	DT: Daytime 9 a.m.–3 p.m.	PT: Primetime 8 p.m.–11 p.m.	EF: Early Fringe 3 p.m.–5 p.m.	LN: Late News 11 p.m.–11:30 p.m.	EN: Early News 5 p.m.–7 p.m.	LF: Late Fringe 11:30 p.m.–2 a.m.		AM Drive: 5 a.m.–10 a.m.		Midday: 10 a.m.–3 p.m.		PM Drive: 3 p.m.–7 p.m.		Evenings: 7 p.m.–12 a.m.
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Designated Media Market (DMA)	The Nielsen-designated geographic area that is covered by market-specific television stations. Currently there are 210 markets.																		
“Earned” or “Free” Media	Exposure obtained from a medium as a result of your publicity and lobbying.																		
Flight Date	The start and end dates of your advertising schedule. Typically, television and radio are purchased on a weekly basis.																		
Frequency	The potential number of times individuals are exposed to an advertising schedule over a given period of time.																		
Impressions	(Typically used with online advertising.) The number of times your ad will be seen over the course of the campaign (number of times displayed X number of viewers). If you purchase 500,000 impressions, the ad will be seen 500,000 times over the course of the advertising period.																		
Gross Rating Points (GRP)	The sum of all ratings. The total ratings of all programs purchased during a given period of time, which come in multiples of 100 (e.g., 100, 500, 1,000). For example, if an organization purchases advertising at 600 GRPs, the average viewer will see the ad 6 times. Gross Rating Points vary by market size and viewing habits, demographic data (such as age and gender), and timing.																		
Matching Spots	During negotiations, outlets frequently offer discounts in the form of free placements. For example, for every two spots an organization purchases, the media outlet may offer to air, or match, one spot for free.																		
Proof	A hard copy of a print ad that you review to be sure that the text is correct and the layout and colors are consistent with the electronic version of the print advertisement.																		
Public Service Announcement (PSA)	A public service message that a media outlet airs free of charge as part of its community service mission. The messages provide information that could significantly affect people’s lives in a positive way.																		
Ratings	The percentage of individuals or audience watching a program in a particular market. For example, a 15-rating = 15 percent of the audience. Ratings vary depending on the age and gender that are being measured.																		
Reach	The percentage of different individuals exposed to a media schedule during a given period of time.																		
Sweep Period	Referring to television networks, the months of November and May. Viewer ratings are compiled then, so these are times when networks typically schedule their best programs and run never-before-seen episodes of popular shows, which bring in more viewers.																		
Tear Sheet	A copy of the ad that ran in the publication, from every publication in which print ads are placed.																		
Traffic	Rotation of spots during a specific media flight.																		

Public Service Announcements

What is a public service announcement?

Public Service Announcements, or PSAs, are public service messages that broadcasters air free of charge as part of their community service programs. Media outlets are required to donate airtime for PSAs.

Does SNAP have PSAs that my organization can use?

SNAP has a number of radio PSAs available for you to provide to local media outlets. All of the PSAs use messages that relate to target audiences. Like the national paid advertising, these messages also encourage people who are eligible for SNAP benefits to apply.

Where can I find PSAs?

You can listen to them, and stations can download them, at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cga/radio.htm>. Feel free to customize these PSAs with your own toll-free number and local message. At the end of this section, you will also find scripts of these same PSAs that you can produce and adapt locally.

Can FNS' paid radio ads used be used as PSAs?

No. The FNS ads were negotiated exclusively for commercial use, not for PSA distribution.

What are my chances of placing PSAs?

Because radio stations can accommodate only a limited number of these “free” advertising spots, and because there are many groups that want to increase awareness of their causes, pitching and placing PSAs can be challenging work. However, because SNAP offers such a tangible benefit to the community, the chances are good that the PSAs will be used. Ask the reporter for a contact at the station who is responsible for PSA placement.

How do I pitch a PSA?

As with a news story, the best way to pitch PSAs is to call or send a letter to the PSA director at the TV or radio station, present the local problem or situation, and show how you are providing a solution.

EXAMPLE

“There are 100,000 hungry men, women, and children in Anytown. Many of these people may be eligible for SNAP benefits, but don’t know it. SNAP benefits can help them put good, healthy food on the table. At the same time, the local economy benefits from SNAP purchases.”

10 Steps to Place Public Service Announcements

The steps in placing Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are similar to pitching regular stories to your local media.

Step 1 Compile Media List

Compile a media list of stations that are likely to have audiences who may be eligible for SNAP benefits and that are also likely to run PSAs. Gather contact information and add it to your list. Many stations have PSA directors who are responsible for determining which PSAs the station will air and when. (See the [Media Outreach](#) section of this toolkit for more information about media lists.)

Step 2 Background Information

Before pitching your PSAs to a local radio station, learn more about the radio station, its programming (country, news, etc.), and its audience. Check out the station's Web site. The more informed you sound about the importance of SNAP messages to the station's audience, the more effective you will be. (See the [Media Outreach](#) section of this toolkit for more information about researching news outlets.)

Step 3 Make Introductory Calls

Make introductory pitch calls before sending your PSAs to stations. Use these initial calls to double-check your contact information and build a rapport with public service and community affairs professionals. Ask for information about PSA submission requirements, such as format or length.

Step 4 Make The Pitch

A sample pitch script is provided in this toolkit. The script provides an outline of the key points you need to cover during a phone conversation or voicemail message with the community or public affairs contact. Use the script as a reference to make sure you cover all of the important points. Practice your pitch aloud at least once before calling. Do not read directly from the script as you talk. Downloadable PSAs are available on the FNS Web site <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/radio/default.htm>

Step 5 Deliver PSAs To Stations

Consider personally delivering your PSAs and a cover letter to the stations on your list. If you have not yet established a relationship, mail your materials. Follow up about a week later.

Step 6 Make Follow Up Calls

If needed, continue placing follow up calls for several weeks to find out if your announcement will run.



Best Time to Pitch PSAs

PSAs can be used at any time of year, but your pitch to radio stations will be more effective if you can find a "hook" to encourage them to run the announcements. This could include:

End of School

In communities that don't participate in the Summer Food Service Program, many children who receive at least one full, healthy meal a day during the school year lose that safety net in the summer, when school is out.

Holiday Season

People are acutely aware of hunger and nutrition issues around the holidays.

During National or Local "Awareness" Weeks or Months

Some awareness weeks may make audiences more receptive to SNAP information — for example, National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week (which is the week before Thanksgiving) and National Nutrition Month (March).

When Paid Advertisements Are Running

Paid advertisements from the national media campaign may be running in your area (you can find out by visiting http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/radio-buys_2010.htm). If paid advertisements are airing locally, use that information to leverage your PSA request.

Step 7 Provide Additional Information

Once you begin pitching your PSAs, some radio stations may request more information about SNAP benefits or your work to reduce hunger. The [Media Outreach](#) section of this toolkit contains media and messaging materials to help prepare your spokesperson.

Step 8 Measure Success

Ask your contacts at the radio stations if they can provide you with specific information on when and how many times your PSA was aired. Track the success of your effort by identifying any increase in the number of calls to your toll-free number during the period when the PSAs ran.

Step 9 Present Findings

Compile your evaluation findings into a memo or presentation to share with your organization and/or partners.

Step 10 Take It To The Next Level

Based on the success of your PSA campaign, you may want to consider a formal partnership with the station, perhaps along with a commercial underwriter such as a grocery store. For more information about partnerships, see the [Partnership](#) section of this toolkit.

Public Service Announcement Readers

What are “readers”?

“Readers” are brief announcements promoting SNAP. Readers are given to radio stations so that their on-air talent can read them live whenever time permits.

Format for readers should include time for message and tagline.

SAMPLE READERS

:10 SECONDS

SAMPLE 1

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program helps low-income people eat right when money’s tight. Call 1-800-221-5689 today. (6.5)
A message from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. (3.5)

SAMPLE 2

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program can help you or someone you know to eat right when money’s tight. Call 1-800-221-5689 today. (6.5)
A message from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. (3.5)

:15 SECONDS

SAMPLE 1

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program can help stretch your budget at the grocery store. It’ll help you eat right when money’s tight. Call 1-800-221-5689 today. (11.5)
A message from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. (3.5)

SAMPLE 2

Keeping up with the fast pace of life takes eating right, especially when money’s tight. If you have low income, consider the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Call 1-800-221-5689 today. (11.5)
A message from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. (3.5)

SAMPLE 3

Attention low-income seniors — the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program can help you eat right when money’s tight. Call 1-800-221-5689 for more information. (11.5)
A message from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. (3.5)

PSA Pitch Script Template

(Note: This sample script targets stations with elderly audiences.)

Hello, my name is XX and I am calling from [YOUR ORGANIZATION]. Is this a good time? (*If not, ask when you can call them back.*) You may not be aware that XX elderly people in [NAME OF STATE/CITY] are having trouble putting food on the table, and are not taking advantage of help that they qualify for.

[YOUR ORGANIZATION] is hoping you will help us address this situation by broadcasting PSAs about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). By spreading the message about SNAP benefits, older members of our community will learn more about the program and how to enroll.

Is this something you think you or your station would be interested in using? I'd be happy to send you some sample PSAs. Please feel free to contact me at XX if you have any questions about SNAP or the PSAs. Again, my name is XX and my number is XX.

Cover Letter for Using Local Readers for PSAs

[DATE]

To: Public Affairs Director

From: [NAME & ORGANIZATION]

RE: [CITY/STATE] SNAP Outreach Effort

(You can add additional information like “To Help Elderly Access Benefits”)

Only about half of those eligible to receive SNAP benefits are currently enrolled.

In [STATE/CITY/TOWN], low-income seniors are feeling the pinch due to bills and other expenses, and are not getting the proper nutrition. By defraying the cost of groceries, SNAP allows recipients to use their limited incomes on other important basic needs like housing, medical costs, transportation, and utilities.

[YOUR ORGANIZATION] is kicking off a “Benefit Bus” tour on [DATE] to help seniors in [STATE/CITY/TOWN] access SNAP benefits without the challenge of finding transportation to a local SNAP office. This bus tour will span X days and X locations from [TIME]. SNAP outreach coordinators will be on hand to prescreen seniors and provide a checklist of necessary paperwork.

Below are scripts for PSAs notifying your listeners about upcoming enrollment activities.

We would appreciate it if your station would read these announcements as often as possible before the event kicks off on [DATE] and throughout the [TIME FRAME OF EVENT].

Thank you in advance for helping connect seniors in [STATE/CITY/TOWN] to the nutrition assistance they need.

RADIO (15 seconds)

SNAP helps you buy the groceries you need. You may qualify and not know it.

[YOUR ORGANIZATION]’s “Benefit Bus” tour will stop at assisted living locations in [NAME OF CITY/TOWN] from [DATE] to [DATE]. Find out more by calling XXX-XXX-XXXX.

RADIO (30 seconds)

With bills and doctor visits, expenses can add up quickly. Sometimes, that makes it hard to put good food on the table. SNAP helps you buy the groceries you need. You may qualify and not know it.

Eligibility for SNAP benefits is based on income and other expenses. For most seniors, the benefit is enough to make a real difference. [YOUR ORGANIZATION]’s “Benefit Bus” tour will stop at assisted living locations in [NAME OF CITY/TOWN] from [DATE] to [DATE].

Find out more by calling XXX-XXX-XXXX.

Cover Letter for Using USDA-Produced PSAs

[DATE]

To: Public Affairs Director
From: [NAME & ORGANIZATION]
RE: SNAP Outreach Effort

Have you ever had to choose between paying the heating bill or having enough food for dinner? Have you been faced with the impossible choice of buying medicine for your sick child or food for the family table? Every day, thousands of people in [NAME OF STATE/TOWN/CITY] grapple with issues like these. But they don't have to.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps low-income people purchase nutritious, healthy food. However, only half of those eligible to receive SNAP benefits are currently enrolled.

At [YOUR ORGANIZATION], we are working hard to raise awareness about SNAP benefits in our community. Many people have a difficult time making ends meet. By helping out with the grocery bill, SNAP benefits allow recipients to use their limited income on other important basic needs like housing, medical costs, transportation, and utilities. We are interested in working with your station to inform listeners about SNAP and how to enroll.

In addition to PSA scripts and readers, taped PSAs are available. We can send you these fully produced spots via e-mail or on a CD. We would appreciate it if your station could roll these announcements into your programming and air them as often as possible.

(Mention how you will follow up with the station and how they can contact you.)

Thank you in advance for helping our community "eat right when money's tight."

[NAME & ORGANIZATION]

Promising Practices

What is a promising practice?

“Promising practices” are everywhere. New ideas or refinements of existing ideas are continuously being implemented by State and local programs to educate and help individuals access their programs. Promising practices may involve big or little changes to existing projects to improve service delivery. They may or may not have evidence of positive results from evaluations; in fact, they might just have a general intuitive appeal rather than a proven effect. Promising practices sometimes prompt completely different ideas. Sometimes, promising practices are those “A-ha!” moments — something that makes sense but you did not think significant right away. Unfortunately, practical knowledge in one community that could lead to significant improvements in another often goes unshared.

Who is compiling our promising practices?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is compiling promising practices to assist States, local agencies, community and faith-based organizations, and others to share their best ideas.

Why is SNAP sharing the practices?

SNAP’s collection of promising practices is an effort to find and share outreach or customer service models that can help increase participation in SNAP. Through this collection of promising practices, timely information on program and policy innovations is disseminated so that all stakeholders may benefit from the experiences of their peers across the country. The sharing of ideas can stimulate program changes, spark creative exchanges, and serve as a launching pad for the next generation of program innovations. It can inspire a dynamic examination of ways to improve service delivery systems for people eligible for, applying for, and participating in SNAP.

Whom can I contact for more information?

The project’s name and a contact person are listed by each promising practice. SNAP has developed an informal process of collecting promising practices. We encourage you to get in touch with the listed contact people for more details. The Web site is updated continually so check back often.

How can I share my promising practice?

Submit your practice to us through the FNS Web site. Tell us about something new you did or how you put an innovative twist on an existing idea. Go ahead and brag about the response you received — from your co-workers, managers, or your customers. This is an opportunity to shine while you give others ideas to improve or develop their projects. Worried that your idea may not be new? Not to worry; something that is “old hat” to some may be a complete revelation to others.

Are you looking for a new idea?

On the Web site, you will find information that you can use in your own project. You can learn about promising practices from around the country as well as from other programs.



**Promising Practices
are Online**

Go to: www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach
and click on “Promising Practices.”

Who can use the Web site?

The Web site is for State and local SNAP agencies as well as Federal/State program staff, volunteers, community members, policymakers, funders, researchers, or anyone else who wants to develop a project or improve the quality of their existing programs.

Some Examples Of Promising Practices

Media Outreach

- **Vermont** Partnering with Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger and Vermont Grocer's Association, the State SNAP agency held a press conference at a supermarket to announce changes in SNAP that make it easier to apply.

Developing Partnerships

- **California** In partnership with the local food bank, Alameda County Social Services facilitated periodic SNAP outreach trainings for organizations interested in helping their own clients apply for SNAP benefits. Participants received a training manual complete with tools and resources to help them get started in their own SNAP outreach efforts.
- **California** Alameda County Food Bank provided on-site "Food Stamp Enrollment Clinics" for clients of other community-based organizations. Bilingual staff from the food bank prescreened clients for potential eligibility and assisted them in completing the application.
- **Connecticut** The State agency sent mailings to soup kitchens, food pantries, and shelters to ask them to make SNAP applications and information available to their customers.
- **New York** The Korean Grocers Association in New York City published SNAP information in Korean.
- **Pennsylvania** Pathmark grocery stores in underserved areas of Philadelphia hosted eligibility prescreening events.
- **Virginia** Americorps volunteers in rural counties of the State went door to door to provide information on SNAP. They talked to people about SNAP benefits while grocery shopping, hosted outreach gatherings, prescreened for potential eligibility, and helped complete application forms.

Using PSAs

- **California** The Food Bank of Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties aired television ads to market the nutrition and health benefits of SNAP.
- **California** The Food Bank of Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties developed a 5-minute video in English and Spanish that answers 12 commonly asked questions about SNAP benefits. The video was distributed to health and social service agencies on California's central coast.

Engaging Special Populations



Engaging Special Populations

Cultural Competency

Find practical explanations as to the importance of effective SNAP outreach across cultures. This section also includes tips and tools for getting to know those in your community as well as resources for working effectively with minority media.

Trusted Messengers

Explores the role of community health workers, promotoras, and other trusted messengers, and how they can be used to help spread the word about SNAP.

Senior Outreach

Whether you are doing outreach to Baby Boomers or the Silent Generation, seniors are a priority audience. This section will build your understanding of this demographic as well as provide guidance on how to customize events and outreach for seniors.

Cultural Competency

Section I. The Right Thing: The Importance of Effective SNAP Outreach Across Cultures

What is cultural competence?

Cultural competence refers to how well people understand and interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Diversity means not only people of different nationalities, ethnic groups, and religious backgrounds, but also includes gender and age, people with disabilities, as well as the extent to which immigrants have integrated into mainstream American culture.

While there are many definitions of cultural competence, we have chosen to use the following as the foundation for this section of the Outreach Toolkit:

Cultural competence is the capacity of an individual or an organization and its personnel to communicate effectively and to convey information in a manner that is easily understood by and tailored for diverse audiences.

What does this section hope to accomplish?

This section of the toolkit provides suggestions and practical tips, planning tools, and real-life examples of how to make SNAP outreach more culturally competent. It is not, however, intended to provide specific strategies and tactics for reaching individuals of distinct races, ethnicities, cultures, or other demographic groups.



Reaching Diverse Audiences

You Know You Are Being Effective When...

- Your staff reflects your client population, or target client population, in racial and cultural makeup and language.
- Your staff is aware of and demonstrates the behaviors, attitudes, and skills that enable them to work well across cultures.
- You work with organizations that are directly involved with the diverse communities you need to reach.
- You have relationships with ethnic or minority media in your community.
- Your outreach includes varied approaches to sharing information with individuals with disabilities.
- You use translation and interpretive services to meet the language needs of your clients.
- Print materials are easy to read and meet the sixth grade literacy level. Print materials include picture and symbol format, as needed.
- Materials are available in different formats, such as video and audiotape and enlarged print.

Why should outreach workers care about being culturally competent?

By using language and materials that are tailored for specific target groups, outreach workers improve communication with clients for better customer service. Ultimately, their jobs are easier, more productive, and more fulfilling. Culturally competent communication allows outreach workers to:

- Spend more time providing services and less time trying to clarify confusing or misunderstood information.
- Decrease the level of stress and anxiety for themselves and clients.
- Reduce the likelihood of errors on applications and other important paperwork.
- Increase the level of trust with clients and improve overall satisfaction with SNAP.

Why is cultural competence important for snap outreach?

The need to reach diverse audiences is greater now than ever before. The U.S. population is changing, and communities today are more racially, ethnically, culturally, and economically different. By the year 2030, the Census Bureau reports that 40 percent of the U.S. population will describe themselves as members of racial and ethnic groups other than non-Hispanic and White.

A recent report on participation rates by various demographic characteristics shows that more than half of all individuals receiving SNAP benefits are non-White:

- More than 33 percent or one-third of participants are Black or African-American.
- Nineteen percent are Hispanic.
- Another 4 percent belong to other races or ethnic groups.

Still, not everyone who is eligible for SNAP takes part in the program. Participation among target populations continues to be low. This is especially true among Hispanics and the elderly:

- About 51 percent of the eligible Hispanic population participate in SNAP.
- Only 30 percent of the elderly who are eligible for SNAP actually participate.

What are the implications of not being culturally competent?

Given the current and projected demographic changes in the United States, outreach providers must take the Nation's increasingly diverse and complex backgrounds into account when conducting SNAP outreach in order to be effective in reaching as many eligible people as possible.

Outreach workers who are not culturally competent are less effective or successful when conducting outreach due to potential miscommunications and misunderstandings. A small amount of time invested up front in learning to communicate effectively with diverse groups, especially those groups that the office serves frequently, will pay off with more efficient time management, better customer relations, and improved participation in SNAP.

SNAP is a nutrition assistance program that enables families to supplement their food budget so that they can buy more healthful food, such as vegetables and fruits. A healthy diet and physical exercise are important. An increasing number of studies and reports, such as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Healthy People 2010 (www.healthypeople.gov), cite poor nutrition as a leading contributor to diseases that disproportionately affect minorities and low-income populations. Consider these other facts:

- Obesity among low-income Americans is linked to having limited or uncertain access to nutritious and safe foods.
- People living in rural areas are more likely to be older, poorer, and less healthy than people living in urban areas.
- Obesity continues to be higher for African-American and Mexican-American women than for non-Hispanic and White women.
- The prevalence of high blood pressure in African-Americans is among the highest in the world.



Myths About SNAP

Myth

"I work every day. SNAP benefits are for people who are unemployed or who can't work."

Fact

Many SNAP users are employed full-time yet need extra help to afford more nutritious foods.

Myth

"I can't buy the types of food my family eats with SNAP benefits."

Fact

Most grocery store chains and even some small specialty or "corner" stores and farmers markets accept SNAP benefits. What's most important is that there are very few foods that you cannot purchase with SNAP benefits; examples of items that may not be purchased are alcohol, pet food, and hot, prepared foods.

Myth

"I refuse to be on welfare. Only welfare recipients receive SNAP benefits."

Fact

SNAP is a nutrition assistance program, which is not the same as welfare. Participants do not have to receive welfare to be eligible for SNAP benefits.

Section II. Getting To Know Your Community: How To Conduct a Needs Assessment

What is a needs assessment?

A needs assessment is the process of gathering and examining information to get a clearer and more accurate picture of an issue, challenge, or environment. In this case, the needs assessment will help you better understand the diverse community in which you want to conduct SNAP outreach. This information is gathered through a series of carefully crafted questions that will likely be asked of individuals inside and outside of your organization so that you can get a number of different opinions. The results can be presented as a formal report or an informal document—the key is to summarize the findings accurately.

Why is a needs assessment an important part of snap community outreach?

A needs assessment will help you better understand the challenges facing underserved communities and the barriers that potential clients face in applying for SNAP benefits. It allows for a more indepth and unbiased look at the problem from a wide range of people. This information can provide new insights and answer questions you may have, such as:

- What do we know about the local needs for SNAP outreach?
- Are we reaching out to the neediest groups?
- Which organizations in our community are conducting SNAP outreach, what services do they provide, and how are these services funded?
- Do various groups understand who is eligible for SNAP benefits?
- Which media are most credible among our target populations?
- How do we establish and maintain trust?
- How can we strengthen the effectiveness of current community outreach activities?
- Do our materials appeal to multicultural audiences?
- Are our materials in the appropriate languages? At the sixth grade reading level?
- Are we maximizing relationships with influential people and organizations to reach diverse communities?

Having the facts in hand enables you to set specific goals, develop tailored plans of action, and determine the best use of limited resources. Once you know and understand your audience, it is easier to develop strategies to reach them.



Reasons To Conduct a Needs Assessment

- To learn how other organizations, such as community-based groups or your local SNAP office, might support your outreach efforts.
- To get tried-and-true suggestions that worked with other programs.
- To get insight into what your target audience really thinks and believes about SNAP benefits.
- To help set goals and measure success.
- To understand basic statistical and other information about the needs in your community and the gaps between services and needs in order to identify appropriate strategies to address them.

How Do I Get Started?

Step 1 Identify The Community

Through your day-to-day activities, you may have a clear understanding of the population in your community.

If you are new to your position and are not sure which groups to reach, there are many sources that can help you create profiles of key populations in your area to identify which group(s) you want to conduct the needs assessment on, starting with your State SNAP agency and your city's Web site.

How To Identify the Community You Want To Reach

Start with your State SNAP agency. They may have population profiles of your community. You can find your State SNAP agency at http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/contact_info/state-contacts.htm.

Other sources include:

When using demographic information or statistics, be mindful that numbers change. Check yearly or frequently for updates.

- The Census Bureau (<http://www.census.gov>)
- The U.S. Department of Labor (<http://www.dol.gov>)
- Visit your city's Web site. Here, you'll likely find demographic information on the racial and ethnic groups in your community and average household incomes. If it's not readily available on the Web site, make a few quick phone calls to city agencies requesting the data you want.
- Contact your city's Office on Aging. The Office on Aging should be able to help identify the number of low-income seniors in your community, along with ZIP code data on where they might reside.
- Contact the local department of education to request schools in your community where large numbers of students receive free or reduced-price lunches. In many cases, they can also provide a profile of the students—their racial/ethnic backgrounds and languages that are spoken.
- Contact the local health department and department of social services. Because both of these agencies have specific programs for low-income residents, they can also provide information on underserved groups in your community—where they reside and programs are already in place to serve them.
- Contact your local United Way, whose mission is to help identify community needs and provide funding to support these efforts. The United Way may be willing to share research and other data that it has collected from and about local groups.
- Contact professors or research institutes in local colleges and universities that may be collecting data or conducting research with your target population.
- After compiling this information, a careful review should help you confirm the community/communities you want to assess and reach out to.

Step 2 Review What You Know

After choosing the population you want to reach, you may find that you already know something about how to reach them with information about SNAP. In fact, you may be aware of many possible solutions. But it's important to go through the process. Ask yourself:

- What other organizations have similar goals and might be willing to work with us to address this need? Don't forget to include your local SNAP office.
- What resources (staff, in-language support, materials) do we have but may not be fully using?
- Has any research been conducted that highlights effective ways of reaching the target population within the community? Can we rely on other work to give us insight and answers?

You may wish to have more than one person in your organization complete the questions to get different opinions and a range of responses.

Step 3 Draft Questions

Asking the right questions is the key to getting the information for your needs assessment. Accurate information helps you develop the most effective and culturally competent outreach plan.

This is an important step, so take your time to think broadly about the type of information you need. You may want to invite other groups to join you, including members of the communities you wish to target and representatives from culturally specific organizations, to help draft or to review your list of questions. Ask if someone has already done a needs assessment—you may want to build upon their model. While your questions maybe tailored to meet local needs, the following list of questions can act as a guide.



Stories of Culturally Incompetent Interactions

Could this happen at your organization?

Ms. G. speaks very little English. She knows she could qualify for social services, such as SNAP and WIC, but finds it very difficult to communicate over the telephone, and is frustrated when she shows up in person because she usually must wait until the only bilingual person in the office is free to assist her. Thus, Ms. G. has to ask a friend or one of her older children to make the call or go with her to the office.

A fixed appointment with a bilingual person is one way to help someone like Ms. G. This way she could avoid long waits, which are often difficult when coordinating schedules with others. The office could also arrange to have its bilingual staff person call Ms. G at home at a scheduled time. This is an opportunity to review the application and identify documents Ms. G would need to provide.

Sample Questions for a Needs Assessment

- Which group(s) are you most interested in reaching and why?
- How many SNAP offices are in your area? Where are they located, and does the location pose a potential barrier (e.g., is it accessible by public transportation)?
- Are there any linguistic or cultural barriers that prevent individuals from participating in SNAP?
- What community resources are available to help minimize these barriers?
- What is happening with your outreach efforts vs. what you would like to happen?
- What groups are already successfully reaching the population you want to access?
- Which of their initiatives have been particularly effective and why?
- Where does the majority of the target population live? Are they clustered in one area or spread out?
- What local organizations and individuals have the greatest influence with the population?
- Do the grocers/farmers markets they patronize accept SNAP benefits? Are they served by public transportation?
- Is public transportation easily accessible in their community? Do public transportation routes reach the local SNAP office and grocery stores? If no, how do people access SNAP and grocery stores?
- Are there existing community events and activities that attract the people you're interested in reaching? Is there a Diabetes Support Group meeting nearby? Is there an annual Cinco de Mayo celebration coming up? What events or activities are popular with your target group?
- What media outlets does this group prefer?
- Is the "word on the street" about SNAP positive or negative? What are the positives and negatives?
- What types of partnerships would help achieve the outreach objectives?
- Would these partners be able and willing to provide volunteer outreach workers? If yes, what services will the volunteers provide; what type of training will they need; and how often will be they available?
- What outreach activities might motivate your audiences to seek more information?
- How can media and community channels be used most effectively?
- Are there any other barriers that prevent potentially eligible individuals of this community from enrolling in SNAP? What are the barriers? What can your organization do to help eliminate the barriers?

Step 4 Identify Who To Talk To

Once you've created a profile of the group(s) you intend to target and gathered the necessary background information, it's time to speak directly to individuals in the "field." It's these "primary sources" that will help you fine-tune your outreach strategies, avoid potential pitfalls and, hopefully, provide ongoing support. While there are a wide range of people who can participate in the needs assessment, you will want to identify those who will provide the most useful information. Once you've identified the people you want to talk to, revisit the questions to make sure they are appropriate for each group. You may need to reword some questions or eliminate one or two for a specific group.

Examples of influential people:

- Religious leaders
- Representatives of faith-based and community-based organizations
- Business leaders
- Doctors, nurses, and nutrition educators
- State or County SNAP workers
- City, County, State, or Federal workers
- Elected officials at the State and community level
- Schools, teachers, and coaches
- Leaders of age- or race-based or culturally specific organizations that advocate for those groups
- Current SNAP participants
- Opinion/trusted leaders in the identified communities such as promotoras
- People in the community you want to reach, including potentially eligible nonparticipants

Step 5 Decide How to Collect Info

Some common and effective methods for gathering information include:

- One-on-one interviews with influential community members. These are useful if you are working with a small budget and are already knowledgeable in the area.
- Written questionnaires conducted with influential community members and members of the community at large. While it might be a little more time-consuming to collect and tabulate the data, there are online tools, such as www.surveymonkey.com, that make drafting a well-crafted research instrument easy for the beginner and experienced researcher alike. Graduate students in survey research courses may be willing to help you design, collect, and/or analyze information. Establish relationships with professors in local colleges and universities who could help you with this project.



Stories of Culturally Incompetent Interactions

Could this happen at your organization?

Mr. M. is an independent, 23-year-old young man with a hearing impairment who uses sign language. He also participates in SNAP. He is able to communicate effectively in most day-to-day situations, but one of his parents or an interpreter usually goes with him on appointments to the doctor, or the Medicaid or SNAP office, because staff cannot communicate with him. Recently, he had an appointment at a SNAP office, but work emergencies prohibited either parent from accompanying him. To make matters worse, it was too late to get an interpreter. Mr. M arrived at the office during an extremely busy time—several clients were already waiting for assistance. Realizing that an interpreter was not available and believing that helping Mr. M would be a lengthy process, the staff immediately brushed him off and asked him to come back later when an interpreter was available.

Unfortunately, no one took the time to ask if Mr. M was comfortable communicating in writing, which he was. Sometimes people assume that individuals with physical disabilities are also developmentally delayed or have limited literacy skills. In addition, if an outreach worker had taken the time to ask if there was someone they could call to help interpret, Mr. M would not have had to make another trip. The night before, he had role-played with his parents on how best to respond to any communication problems. Therefore, a quick telephone call to either parent would have enabled Mr. M to get the information he needed.

Additional Techniques for a More Comprehensive Needs Assessment

Your organization's resources will likely dictate the complexity of your needs assessment. With additional staffing and budget, focus groups and/or literature reviews can help fill in remaining information gaps. If you have the budget but not the time, market research firms can help you; www.greenbook.org provides an extensive listing of market research firms.

Focus Groups

These are sessions held with small groups of the target audience. A facilitator, who speaks the same language as the participants, will ask specific questions and the responses will be recorded for later analysis. However, getting individuals to participate in a focus group can take time and may require some sort of incentive for participation, such as meals, transportation costs, or childcare expenses. Your partners can play an important role in helping you stay within your budget by locating facilitators and focus group participants. Focus groups with current participants and eligible nonparticipants can help you get a sense of what community members know and feel about SNAP, as well as resources, barriers, and possible solutions. With current SNAP participants, you can explore their motivations for enrolling and where they received information about the program. In contrast, potential participants may be able to share what they've heard about SNAP, any concerns they have, and outreach methods that might be effective.

Literature Review

Review existing research about the population of interest and their behaviors, habits, or preferences as they relate to nutrition and/or nutrition programs. The reference desk at your public library may conduct a search for you—free or for very little cost. Of course, many of the documents you're looking for may be found online. Another idea is to seek volunteers at your local university. Often graduate students are looking for research projects to enhance their coursework or gain real-world experience. Another good starting point is the bibliography at the end of this section.

Regardless of the methods you use, the most important part is to listen and respect the insights of people who have access to and understand the populations you want to reach. In the end, your needs assessment will not only ring with a richness that only a diverse, multifaceted group can provide, but will also provide a blueprint for enhancing culturally competent SNAP outreach.



Free or Low-Cost Sources of Information

- The Food and Nutrition Service's Office of Research, Nutrition, and Analysis (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/research.htm>)
- Local SNAP office or State SNAP agency
- Local or college library
- Local Census Bureau or Census Bureau Web site (www.census.gov)
- City/County/State health department Web sites and community clinics
- Local United Way or other community funding sources
- Professors in local colleges and universities who conduct research with your target population
- Race-, ethnic-, and/or culturally specific business associations
- Race-, ethnic-, culture-, disability-, and hunger-related advocacy groups

Section III. The Right Messengers: Breaking Down Barriers With Community Partners

How can community partners help us reach diverse audiences?

One of the key elements of reaching out to diverse audiences about the benefits of SNAP is working with your community partners. Outreach providers who reach diverse groups must extend their reach beyond the walls of their own organizations to other programs with similar missions and services.

Community partners can offer substantive and long-lasting benefits to your organization and to the health of the community. They can:

- Provide cultural perspectives.
- Bring credibility to your efforts.
- Bring expertise in working with the groups you want to target. For instance, they may have knowledge of health and nutrition beliefs and practices, and preferred sources of information and distribution channels.
- Offer help with providing translation and interpretive services or allowing your organization to conduct SNAP prescreenings at their offices.
- Bring community resources to support your efforts; for example, access to media, community opinion leaders, or financial and/or in-kind support for costly services such as translation and interpretive assistance.
- Discuss new ways of doing business.
- Assist in efforts to select focus group participants or “pretest” materials (see [Section IV](#), The Right Materials for Diverse Audiences).

Lastly, some community partners can become ambassadors for your organization within the target communities. Those partners who will be most effective at conveying your program messages will be ones who are already trusted messengers within those communities.



Stories of Culturally Incompetent Interactions

Could this happen at your organization?

Ms. B. takes great pride in her appearance and frequently receives compliments on her choice of clothing and jewelry. On this day, Ms. B. walks into the SNAP Office to apply for benefits. She sits down with a caseworker who immediately compliments Ms. B. on her outfit. The caseworker goes on to remark how she can't believe someone so well-dressed would need SNAP benefits. Although Ms. B. finished her appointment, she left feeling insulted. She could not believe that anyone, especially a caseworker, would stereotype the way SNAP recipients dress. The next day, Ms. B. called the county grievance office to lodge a complaint.

There's an old adage that's well known but not practiced nearly enough: “Don't judge a book by its cover.” Always avoid making assumptions or judgments about people based on outward appearance, or even a few moments of conversation. The USDA prohibits discrimination in all its programs, including SNAP outreach activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, or disability. In this scenario, the caseworker should have refrained from making remarks related to Ms. B's outfit or outward appearance. In Ms. B's case, this was not only a wrong assumption, but one based on stereotypes about race and income. Instead, the case worker should have followed federal mandated SNAP policy (www.fns.usda.gov/snap/government/policy.htm)

How do I identify community partners?

Step 1 Assess The Gaps

Are you in regular contact with anyone who works with or has ties to the communities you need to reach? If not, then you'll want to look specifically for partners who are linked to those communities.

Step 2 Ask Your Colleagues

Some names of community partners may surface through the needs assessment process. In addition, coworkers, SNAP workers, advisory groups, board members, or other professional colleagues, particularly ones who work with the communities you want to target or are focused on access to health and nutrition information, are good sources for information about possible partners.

Step 3 Don't Forget Your Clients

Your SNAP clients can be the best source for identifying good community partners. Informally poll several clients about whom they trust for information about issues that matter in the community and, more specifically, about issues such as health and nutrition.

Step 4 Broaden Your Thinking

You'll want to make sure that you are not limiting your potential partnership pool to those organizations or individuals you know or with whom your organization has had a previous relationship. Other reliable sources to check for suitable partners include:

- Internet, including news search engines to see what organizations are quoted in the media
- Nonprofit or charity directories (available at your local library)
- Community and faith-based organizations
- United Way
- Schools
- Local age-, cultural-, or ethnic-specific businesses or professional organizations, such as local Office on Aging; local Office of Asian and Pacific Islanders; or local in-language newspapers (most staff speak English)

More on identifying valuable community partners can be found in the [Partnership](#) section of the SNAP Outreach Toolkit.



Maintaining Relationships Diverse Partners

- Share information and resources that could support one another's efforts.
- Recognize and respect cultural differences in expressing opinions and in the decision making process.
- Be flexible. Meeting times and locations may need to support childcare arrangements and/or attendance by family members or children.
- Rotate meetings to visit groups located in ethnic and rural communities.
- Be sensitive to the fact that the level of formality associated with meetings, meeting times, conference calls, or other group endeavors may reflect differences in racial, ethnic, or cultural habits, customs, and traditions.
- If hosting meetings, be prepared to provide interpretation and translation services for participants with limited English proficiency or who need accommodations due to disability.
- If chairing a committee, consider including a SNAP participant representing each of the diverse communities you want to reach.

How do i reach out to community partners?

Send a letter to potential partners to introduce yourself and your program. Acknowledge their work in the community, and identify the specific audience you need to reach. State your desire to discuss how you might work together. Make sure to include what you want them to respond to or your planned follow up to the correspondence.

“Please call me if you are interested in discussing how we might work together...” or,

“I will call you next week to discuss how we might work together....”

Telephone potential partners and schedule a convenient time to discuss your suggestions and requests. If the potential partner is referred by a colleague, ask him or her to facilitate an introduction.

What is the difference between a partnership and a coalition, and what can one do that the other cannot?

There is strength in numbers. Sometimes that strength lies with just two or three people and other times it comes with 10 or 12. A partnership – typically defined as two or three individuals or organizations coming together to work toward a common goal – is ideal for many organizations. Partnerships are more likely than coalitions to include members who are of like mind and mission. They tend to be much easier to manage. Finally, they reach decisions more quickly and are more likely to stay on point and focused toward reaching a single goal. On the other hand, because of the limited number of individuals, a partnership may not offer a broad representation of ideas. Depending on the project, the workload could be quite heavy.

Because coalitions are more structured and tend to meet more regularly, there's a greater opportunity to share ideas, lessons, and resources. Because coalitions often function as work groups, you are also more likely to get in on the ground floor when planning culturally specific activities and events.



Challenges in Working With Coalition Partners

Anytime you are working with a large group, there are bound to be challenges. While the benefits of coalitions certainly outweigh the negatives, you should be aware of the following:

- Larger, better-funded organizations tend to have more experience conducting meetings and outreach and may talk more than those with less experience. Make an effort to engage everyone equally and focus on your topic and goals to maintain control of your meetings.
- People may have had previous bad experiences with other members of the coalition. Encourage participants to focus on the business issues being discussed rather than personal issues.
- Group decision making may require a longer approval process. Propose and agree on an approach for achieving consensus.
- You may have to compromise on some issues. Determine which issues or positions you are willing to compromise on before negotiations.
- Additional workload, meetings, and outside activities can be time-consuming. Consider the members' time and interests when organizing events.

Ways To Ensure Outreach Materials Are Appropriate

Materials Are Culturally Competent When They...

- Show respect for the cultural values, beliefs, and practices of the intended audiences both in content and graphics.
- Contain straightforward messages and are free from idioms, clichés, and colloquialisms that the intended audience may not be familiar with or understand.
- Convey the intended concept in a manner that is meaningful to the target audience. Some words or ideas are more difficult than others to get across, especially in translation. For instance, in other languages the concept of SNAP benefits must be conveyed, rather than translating the actual words. Use your community partners or a translation service, if needed, to make sure that the message you are trying to convey is on target.
- Do not lay blame or use guilt or negative stereotypes to get the point across.
- Are readily available in the preferred language or medium of the target audience.
- If appropriate, use pictures and symbols to simplify messages for low-literate audiences.
- Use large and/or bold type for seniors or people who are visually impaired.
- Depict the family and community as primary systems of support and intervention. To achieve greater efficiency, use pictures of persons and families that reflect the community you are trying to reach. If you are depicting activities, illustrate an activity that your target group is familiar with and enjoys.
- In general, organizations that make ideal partners are ones that have been in the community for a while, providing services or offering programs to similar populations. Selecting appropriate partners is important as it improves the likelihood that there will be shared vision, as well as desire and appreciation for ensuring cultural and linguistic competence and success.

Section IV. The Right Materials for Diverse Audiences

How are materials important in SNAP outreach?

Once you have identified your target audience and have community partners on board to help you, one of the next steps is to make sure you have the materials to conduct outreach. Your materials must tell the story—that there is a program that can help individuals and their families with their unique nutrition needs.

What culturally competent materials already exist?

A wealth of translated SNAP information—from forms and brochures, to fliers and fact sheets—is available on the FNS Web site. To view translations and to print out the materials, visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/translations.htm>. Also, be sure to check out your local SNAP office to see what materials are available.

How do i go about creating my own culturally competent materials?

Materials should be tailored to reflect the demographics and cultural backgrounds of the intended audience. This should be evident in how they look, what they say, and the manner in which actions and people are depicted. As a rule of thumb, keep information simple and be sure to provide a description of the program, how to get it, where to ask for help, and where to use the benefits.

Is there a way to test materials to make sure they are culturally competent before i use money to produce and distribute them?

Yes. That's where your community partners can help! Call on their expertise and ask them to review draft materials and point out areas that could be problematic given the intended audience. Also, partners can assist by helping to assemble small groups of the intended audience to test materials for unbiased feedback. This may seem a bit time-consuming on the front end, but it can go a long way in mitigating costs associated with “fixing” inappropriate materials later on. Keep in mind that some feedback about the materials may have more to do with preferences than possible barriers. For example, while paper quality or brochure colors are important considerations, your goal in testing for cultural competence is to identify wording, graphics, or other content that could be a barrier to someone understanding or taking part in your program.

How can i find good, reliable translation services on a shoe-string budget?

If you are trying to reach a certain segment of the population because of their predominance in the community and need for service, chances are other organizations and programs are, too. Local universities and colleges, community partners, and other neighborhood programs and services are all good resources for obtaining low-cost translation and interpretive services.

What is the best way to ensure that my materials reach the intended audience?

The importance of the mode of delivery cannot be overstated when communicating health messages to certain audiences. Through your needs assessment, you identified trusted messengers or sources of information about food and nutrition. In your community, these sources could be peers, elders, spiritual leaders, business leaders, or medical professionals. They can help distribute materials or steer you toward appropriate distribution points. Grassroots outreach through faith-based organizations may also play a critical role in reaching intended audiences, particularly in African-American, Asian, and Hispanic communities, where churches and related organizations often play a central role.

Knowing the preferred language will help you decide whether or not to transcreate or adapt your materials or to provide information in alternative formats, such as large print, Braille or video.

What are some other ways of reaching my target audience?

Don't rely solely on written materials to get the word out! Printed materials are the least preferred mode of communication—and that goes for most Americans today. Among diverse populations, surveys consistently reveal that word of mouth, phone calls, or face-to-face and peer-to-peer communications are the most desired forms of communication. Consider asking volunteers from partnering organizations to help spread the word. Public service announcements (PSAs) are another way to get free publicity for your program. Most stations will run a select number of PSAs at no cost; however, there is stiff competition for airtime. There is no guarantee that your ad will be chosen and, if it is, that it will air during a time when your target audience(s) is listening or watching. Generally, paid advertisements are run during the most desirable time slots.

By participating in community events, such as health fairs, supermarket openings, or anniversary promotions, your chances of reaching large numbers of people are pretty good. But you'll still need to check beforehand to make sure that the event reaches the population you want to connect with, and that it is usually well-attended and conducive to disseminating SNAP information. A block party or festival with loud music might be popular with the intended audience and well-attended, but at the end of the day, you'll probably find most of your materials on the ground or in the trash. Look to your community partners, clients, and even event organizers for help to identify the most worthwhile events.

Another way to personally touch clients and individuals who are potentially eligible for SNAP benefits is by using the promotora model. Promotora, the Spanish word for “promoter,” is a model for outreach that uses a lay worker who lives in the targeted community to educate residents. Their expertise? The knowledge they have of the community rather than their formal education, and the established level of trust they have with residents—something an “outsider” would have difficulty gaining—coupled with some basic training in a specific health issue or SNAP outreach. The promotora model can use both male and female outreach workers, depending on the target population, and can be successful in reaching all minority communities, particularly immigrants.



Stories of Culturally Incompetent Interactions

Could this happen at your organization?

For the past 2 years at the Henson Community Health Fair, Maria has talked with Mr. Williams, who stops by her table with his son to talk about SNAP and whether or not she thinks he might be eligible. Each year, Maria invites Mr. Williams to have a seat at her table, where she gives him an application and asks him to read and complete it to get the process started. But Mr. Williams says he's in a hurry--his son has football practice--and that he doesn't have time to do it right here, but that he'll fill it out at home and mail it back to the office in the next few days. Maria never hears back from Mr. Williams, that is, until the next year's health fair where he hangs around her table asking for the same information.

Reluctance in filling out paperwork or signing documents can be a sign that an individual may have difficulties with reading, writing, or comprehension. This can be hard to spot because often they will go to great lengths to avoid the embarrassment of asking for assistance. For instance, Mr. Williams was trying to find out as much information as he could without having to read anything, and he had a good excuse for not filling out the application onsite, where his problem might have become apparent. Some people even carry around newspapers and magazines to throw off anyone who might be suspicious.

To help the individual, and most importantly avoid causing embarrassment, outreach workers can acknowledge that the process can get overwhelming and offer to go over a brochure with the person—point by point—or read through the application—question by question—and write the answers, if necessary. This presents a win-win situation—it meets the goals of both the outreach worker and the individual, in an efficient, professional, and respectful manner.

Section V. Getting to the Root of It: How To Work With Minority Media

What are minority media?

Today there is an abundance of media outlets that specifically target one or more ethnic populations, races of people, or age groups. Local demographics typically will drive the need for and preponderance of minority media in a given geographic area. In the case of media that target African-Americans and Hispanics, there are well-established outlets in most big cities and urban areas across the country. Asian media are emerging in those same areas, as well. Building relationships with media that specifically target your audience can be important to communicating the benefits of SNAP.

Why is it important to use minority media?

Minority media are another trusted messenger for reaching diverse audiences about SNAP. Minority media highlight news and events of particular importance to their audience. In addition, in-language media provide an invaluable service for those who do not speak English. Further, minority media personalities tend to be well-respected and credible sources on issues that affect their community. Minority media are also more likely to use public service advertising and news that target their audience. Topics concerning health and education are of primary importance for the audience as well as the media.

I know radio and television are popular media, but what about newspapers and magazines?

Print outlets, like newspapers and magazines, are still a very popular medium for older people across all racial and ethnic groups. For some cultures, newspapers are also a link to the community and to the country of origin and serve as a resource guide. Print also allows for further explanation of topics that cannot be fully covered on radio or television.

How should facts and figures be presented to minority and targeted media?

It's okay to use statistics, but do not rely on facts and figures alone to tell your story. Prove your story's relevance to your target audience. Make sure your statistics and data focus on the target audience, as well. Keep in mind that sources and spokespeople should be credible with groups you are trying to reach. If possible, bring statements from community leaders as testimonials for your story and consider including real-life examples of how the program can be used.

Beyond sending out materials regularly to media, how else can i build relationships with minority media in my area?

You may find that editors and staff at many minority media outlets are actively involved in the community and sit on numerous committees and local boards. In short, they make great advocates for your organization beyond today's story.

How can I find the minority media in my area?

To ensure that your media contact list is up-to-date on minority or targeted media in your area, go to your local library or check online for media directories, such as Bacon's, or do a general Internet search. It's also worthwhile to go into the communities you want to reach and check out what free papers are available—ethnic supermarkets and restaurants are a good place to pick up a few or visit a local newsstand for a broad range of local media. Chambers of Commerce may also have information about local media.

Step 1 Identify Media Outlets

Outlets should be those with readers or listeners who represent your target audience.

Step 2 Know What is Newsworthy

Stories that are newsworthy to minority media will have a sense of immediacy and offer fresh, new information that will impact their audience's lives.

Step 3 Develop Story Angles

One story can be presented from different perspectives, which will make it more appealing to the media and their audiences.

Step 4 Pitch Your Story

Decide how best to present your story—in a press release or letter. For examples of both, look at the [Media Outreach](#) and [Media Relations](#) section of this toolkit.

Step 5 Follow Up!

This is an important step to getting your story covered in mainstream or minority media given the amount of information most media outlets receive and the ever decreasing number of reporters available to cover stories.

**Tools & Tips****Tips for Success When Working With Minority Media**

- Use statistics about SNAP that are relevant to your target audience.
- Be prepared with SNAP information and other supporting materials. Minority media often work with much smaller staffs and may ask you to provide photographs and background materials.
- Check with each media outlet on whether or not they need information in English or translated. Some will translate for you, but not always.
- Identify and offer culturally appropriate spokespeople, including community leaders and trusted people such as religious leaders. Don't forget about the director of your local SNAP office.
- Include tips and educational information about how to use the program

Section VI. Culturally Competent + Customer Service:

Two Peas in a Pod

The focus of this toolkit is on outreach, but really that is only the first step in ensuring that more diverse audiences participate in SNAP. Outreach efforts can be undone in a matter of seconds with a negative encounter at the first point of contact with SNAP. If individuals or families are met with insensitivity, lack of courtesy and respect, bias, or even discrimination, we may lose a potential participant.

After a negative encounter, clients may experience:

- Feelings of being unwelcome, unwanted, and not valued
- Fear of further contact with the office or agency
- Fear that complaining about negative experiences with staff will compromise service or benefits
- Anger, frustration, and insult. Thus, they may refuse to initiate further contact.
- Confusion about completing paperwork, following instructions or next steps, because clients did not understand acronyms used by an eligibility worker.

After a negative encounter, organizations may experience:

- Loss in time and resources due to missed appointments or errors on paperwork
- Loss of clients due to negative first impressions or word-of-mouth
- Frustrated staff due to lack of training and knowledge of appropriate ways to handle certain situations
- Possible filing of a grievance or report of discrimination based on a bad experience with a first point of contact

Being Culturally Sensitive in the Application Process

- Support and obtain professional development and training for frontline and eligibility staff on diversity and cultural and linguistic competence. Share articles and other materials that will help in this effort.
- Emphasize customer service and courtesy. Accurate information should be provided in a respectful and timely manner.
- Ensure that everyone is aware of outside resources that may exist, and how and when it is appropriate to access those resources.
- Develop written guidelines for handling situations that are procedural in nature, such as accessing TTY or language-line services and interpreters.
- Train and retrain frontline workers on your agency's policies and procedures regarding communication issues, such as serving individuals who speak little or no English.
- Identify bilingual staff or those who have an affinity with other cultures in your agency who can make a connection with individuals whose primary language is not English.
- Train and retrain frontline workers on how to serve individuals who have special communication challenges, such as a limited literacy level.
- Do not assume that supervisors are knowledgeable about the behaviors, attitudes, and skill sets necessary to work effectively with diverse populations. They may also need training.
- Consider cross-training with an organization that can teach you about a specific culture. In return, you can teach them about the SNAP application process so they can relay this information to their constituents.

Tips for Communicating With Clients & Families

At the heart of cultural competence is learning to communicate effectively with individuals and their families. Here are a few tried and true suggestions:

- When working with people different from yourself, it's important to put your own personal biases aside. Keep an open mind and don't jump to conclusions. Because a person speaks with an accent does not mean they are not a native-born citizen. Take time to learn about the person you are speaking with, which demonstrates respect and an understanding of cultural competency.
- Establish rapport. In many cultures, it is important to establish some type of relationship before discussing business. Taking a few extra moments to ask questions and learn more about an individual and his/her family often makes an enormous difference in the long run.
- While developing rapport, refrain from discussing topics, such as personal relationships or behaviors that may be misinterpreted. As a practice, avoid making jokes or displaying questionable posters or artwork in your office or workspace.
- If you don't know what their native language is, use the "I Speak" document available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/translations.htm>, which lists, in 36 different languages, the words "I Speak." Give this document to your clients so they can point out for you which language they speak when they spot it.
- Respect personal space. When you first meet with potential clients, ask them to sit where they feel the most comfortable. This will allow people to choose the personal distance that makes them most comfortable. Similarly, refrain from casually tapping or touching someone, which in some cultures can be perceived as being too familiar.
- Identify the decision maker. Find out who the influential parties are and how they make decisions. It may be important to ask, "Do you want to discuss SNAP with other members of your family?"
- Send a message through children but do not use children as interpreters. For many parents who don't speak English well, their children often serve as conduits for information. They can take home what they received in school—for instance, information on summer programs or SNAP. However, some caution must be taken if a parent brings a child to a meeting to serve as an interpreter. Children may be able to informally convey casual conversation points. However, eligibility for a government program is different. Children may not understand the meaning of technical words such as income and resources. Also, parents may not feel comfortable discussing certain information such as household income in front of their children.
- Ask questions and listen to the answers. Asking questions shows that you really are interested in what a person has to say and his or her perspectives. But pay attention. Do not interrupt your client or try to put words in his or her mouth.
- Check for understanding. In some cultures, people are reluctant to ask questions of authority figures. Explain that asking for clarification is acceptable then ask follow up questions to determine whether they correctly understood you. Ask open-ended questions to ensure the information has been adequately understood.
- Learn greetings and titles of respect in other languages that you commonly encounter.
- Write numbers down. People easily confuse numbers spoken in a new language.

Eight Common Mistakes To Avoid

1. Disrupting home and work schedules when conducting education and outreach activities.
2. Dismissing cultural preferences, customs, and traditions when discussing health and nutrition.
3. Assuming others perceive things the same way you do.
4. Getting “right down to business.” In many cultures, socializing is an important first step before discussing business or personal matters.
5. Conducting interviews or discussing personal information in an open setting. Receiving assistance from outside agencies is an embarrassment in some cultures, and may be better discussed behind closed doors.
6. Misreading silence for confusion or lack of knowledge. Allow for a short period of silence or reflection. Rather than asking if the person understood what was discussed, ask open-ended questions as you probe for understanding.
7. Ignoring the importance of such factors as age, gender, or position in family when asking for decisions.
8. Making assumptions based on stereotypes.

Examples

Ms. L. has a Hispanic surname and speaks with an accent. She arrives for a community-sponsored workshop on how to apply for SNAP. When she approaches the sign-in table and gives her name to the staff person, she is promptly asked to step to the side and wait a moment. The staff person speaks slowly and in a loud voice. Ms. L. immediately knows that the staff person assumes she cannot speak English, and has gone to get someone who is bilingual to help out. Although she is pleased that they are making the effort to provide translators for individuals who require this level of language assistance, she wishes they had asked about her specific needs.

Ms. T is African-American. She stops by the SNAP booth at a citywide festival and asks where in her community she can find out more about applying for SNAP. She notices that instead of asking where she lives, the outreach worker assumes she lives in a predominately African-American section of town and immediately refers her to a location in that area. This infuriates Ms. T because she does not live in that area and must point that out before receiving the correct information.

Kernels of Wisdom

I participate on a weekly talk show for the Haitian community. It's a 20-minute question-and-answer, call-in show that has a cultural theme each week. My job is to tie that theme into a nutrition-focused topic.

SNAP Outreach Grantee

We cover everything that affects and benefits the Hispanic community. We are always interested in initiatives that benefit the Hispanic community. Personally, I prefer receiving information via email. And we always appreciate good quality photos.

Mary Aviles, Hispanic editor, EFE News Service (national news agency)

Recently, we've been covering stories about how Hispanics are the minority group that's been able to overcome poverty the fastest, according to studies. I think there needs to be more education on the program. There are families that qualify for SNAP, and yet don't take advantage of it. Others don't take advantage of their right because they're scared they'd draw criticism and that they'd be labeled as lazy and as irresponsibly having too many kids.

Jose Carrera, El Dia (Houston)

Our biggest pet peeve is old news. We also don't like it when we are given little time before an event. We value information that affects the Hispanic community: education, crime, etc. Sometimes we get information that is unrelated to Chicago or to Hispanics.

Arely Padilla, reporter, La Raza (Chicago)

Kernels of Wisdom

Almost all our reporters are native Chinese speakers, and some may not speak English well or at all. Therefore, we prefer translated, in-language fact sheets and releases.

Emerson Chu, Southern Chinese Daily News (Houston)

If organizations have big presence in our communities, then we are more likely to cover news about that organization. By participating in our events and supporting our communities, they will appear credible, trustworthy, and recognizable in our particular ethnic community. Consequently, our community will be more interested in their news.

Yunju Choi, News Korea (Dallas)

A story doesn't have to apply exclusively to Asian communities to be relevant to our publications. It can be a story that affects populations regardless of ethnicity, but if it is somehow relevant to our ethnic communities, our readers may well be interested.

Abelardo Mogica, Philippine Mabuhay News (National City)

While we cover news that is relevant to the Asian community, we prefer to get news that is specifically relevant to our target nationality group. As a Japanese publication, our ideal news relates to the Japanese population specifically.

Jacob Marolies, Yomiuri Shimbun, (New York City)

Kernels of Wisdom: Partnerships

Partnerships can be extremely effective, even among groups that don't agree on some issues; our common points are far more numerous and powerful than our differences.

Larry Goolsby, American Public Human Services Association

We have quite a few helpful volunteers from local credit unions. Their customer service skills are great, and they're used to helping people complete applications.

Teresa Kunze, FNS Outreach Grantee Catholic Charities of Wichita, Kansas

Faith-based groups sometimes get church volunteers to go door-to-door talking to those they imagine could use a service or program.

Jean Beil, Catholic Charities USA

We partner with the traditional organizations, like senior centers. But we also work with grocery stores and apartment complex managers. We make it a priority to free up our outreach workers so they can attend community meetings, whenever they happen.

Ana Paguaga, FNS Outreach Grantee
Greater Waterbury Interfaith Ministries, Waterbury, CT

Give partnerships a chance to work; invest time to develop trust.

Nicole Christensen, FNS Outreach Grantee
Food Change, New York City

Kernels of Wisdom: Partnerships

Fostering of partnerships is difficult, however, vitally important. Partnerships are beneficial for agencies, especially to underserved populations and community organizations that work with these populations. As for Vietnamese Social Services, it has a positive effect and brings growth to our Somali, Vietnamese, and Burmese immigrants and refugees.

Thao Dao, FNS Outreach Grantee
Vietnamese Social Services

The best tool is the power of the relationship.

Jose Humphreys, Esperanza USA

Trusted Messengers

Enlisting Community Health Workers and Other Trusted Messengers in SNAP Outreach

This chapter introduces community- and faith-based organizations to a valuable community resource: Community Health Workers (CHWs) who are those trusted messengers in the community who effectively communicate with our target audience. Also included in this chapter is a step-by-step guide on how to do SNAP outreach using CHWs and tips to secure funding for your project.

Who are CHWs?

CHWs are individuals who are trusted members of their communities. They can help with your organization's outreach efforts. Depending on where you reside, CHWs may be known as trusted messengers, barefoot doctors, health promoters, health agents, village health workers, public benefits coordinators, aging service coordinators, or promotores/promotoras (typically used among Spanish-speaking audiences). For the purposes of this chapter, "community health workers" or "CHWs" will refer to all trained and trusted messengers including those individuals known only as volunteers.

CHWs often act as connectors between community residents and social service systems, and some may be trained as paraprofessionals to provide limited health care. They typically serve low-income populations and are either volunteers or receive a small stipend for their services through community-based organizations. CHWs usually obtain train-the-trainer instruction through community organizations or health clinics.



Tools & Tips

When considering a CHW, think of a trusted member of the community who:

- Understands the needs of the community
- Helps educate hard-to-reach populations about various programs
- Can link SNAP offices with hard-to-reach populations
- Knows how to reach community members and is familiar with where they gather
- Provides information and conducts culturally and linguistically appropriate outreach

What types of services do CHWs provide?

A CHW can perform multiprogram outreach and help educate community residents about various programs such as SNAP. Individuals and families often are not aware of all of the programs offered in their communities or may be confused about program requirements or intimidated about applying. CHWs can help provide accurate information to the people they live among.

A CHW can also offer interpretation and translation services, help people receive care they need, and provide culturally appropriate health and nutrition materials and information.

Why is it important to enlist CHWs in SNAP outreach efforts?

Because CHWs help bridge social and cultural barriers between community members and health or social service systems, they can be especially effective in conducting outreach to low-income, minority, and urban and rural communities.

If my organization's CHWs expand their outreach efforts to include SNAP, how do I involve my local SNAP office with our project?

Begin by making an appointment with the local office to discuss your project. State or local SNAP representatives should be able to provide you with SNAP data showing areas with low participation. They can also tell you what other organizations may be doing and where they could use your help. They can also let you know if any community organizations are conducting outreach through the [State outreach plan](#).

For the SNAP office to be of assistance, it's important that they understand your project. It is also important to establish a point of contact at the local office who can help develop your project. As with any project, it will operate more efficiently if protocols and procedures are established and followed.

Of course, the amount of local office involvement will depend on what activities your CHWs will be performing. The more complex the activities (e.g., filling out application forms or prescreening for eligibility), the more involved the local office may want to be. If your project will have CHWs filling out application forms, they need to understand the questions on the form as well as the process to submit completed applications.

How do I identify and locate CHW volunteers?

You may wish to talk to other community partners such as faith-based organizations and grassroots groups such as community service organizations about their volunteer networks. Ask them to help identify people that the community turns to for information. Other sources of volunteers might be national organizations such as Area Agencies on Aging that have local chapters. Contact them or check their Web sites to find out more about their volunteer networks at the local level.

How do I determine which CHW outreach activities might be right for my community?

A community needs assessment can help you learn about unmet needs, identify available resources, meet new partners, and find good opportunities to collaborate on projects. You may be able to work with other community groups to conduct the assessment.

What do I do if other groups are performing the SNAP outreach activities that I would like to do?

Talk to the groups who are conducting SNAP outreach in your community. Ask if your organization can help with their existing outreach efforts. If your community has not done a needs assessment, suggest it.

If you find that existing outreach efforts already cover an area that you had targeted or duplicate what you are planning, you may decide to work in a different part of your county or State or take on other aspects of outreach that complement existing efforts.



Recipe for Success

"Promotoras have a natural ability to relate and speak to the people with whom they share a common neighborhood. Trust is the basis for their successful and efficient community labor."

Maria Lemus, Executive Director
Vision y Compromiso



Tools & Tips

When coordinating with other groups or volunteer networks, consider using a map to assign separate areas in a community for SNAP outreach efforts.

What reporting process should I set up with CHWs during the outreach project?

It will depend on your project. With any project, if information is being collected, it is important to develop appropriate documents and procedures. Documents that must be completed by CHWs should be developed prior to training and explained at your training session.

During initial training, ensure that CHWs have a good understanding of their role in the project, what documents they need to maintain, and the reasons why. Outreach strategies may vary from county to county, so you may need to customize your reporting documents.

Are there templates that I can use?

Yes, there are templates you can use to help facilitate your train-the-trainer session. You can find them under the main toolkit Web site page.

Templates include:

- Sample curriculum
- SNAP verification check list
- English-language card with SNAP eligibility information
- Spanish-language card with SNAP eligibility information
- “Release of Information” form
- Monthly reporting template to report progress or to help with project evaluation
- Certificate for completion of training
- Budget template

What is a good way to train CHW volunteers?

A train-the-trainer model is an effective way to teach processes, procedures, and expectations to your volunteers. In this model, you can start by locating and training 5 to 10 people who show leadership skills, and they in turn train others.

Since CHWs may have preferences on what types of SNAP outreach activities they will perform, you must decide prior to screening them whether you will allow some flexibility.

After lead CHWs have been trained, what should my next steps be?

To strengthen and expand your volunteer network of CHWs, lead CHWs should recruit additional trusted messengers who are willing to do SNAP outreach. The things that volunteers are willing to do may vary for a number of reasons, such as available time or willingness to ask personal questions about a household’s income or assets.

What are some activities lead CHWs can perform?

In order to have a number of CHWs involved with your project, it is important to negotiate each CHWs role. To get you started with ideas, some activities include:

- Find and train other CHWs to assist with outreach.
- Coordinate information sessions with their fellow CHWs, community leaders, and volunteers to further disseminate information about SNAP among the target population.
- Report back to your organization about efforts to obtain new volunteers.
- Plan and schedule trainings for new CHWs and refresher training, as needed.
- Maintain a database of trained volunteers, what work they are trained to perform, and time spent on project work.
- Compile information to evaluate projects.
- Respond to policy questions or coordinate them with designated individuals at local SNAP offices.
- Conduct outreach to potential clients and make any necessary referrals.

How can my organization promote my outreach project?

Local talk show hosts welcome community news, especially if it is a public service. Utilize radio or television community events shows; advertise in community newspapers, church bulletins, fliers, and brochures. You may also ask other organizations to include information in their newsletters, on Web sites, or in their brochures. To get organizations to use your message to promote your project, develop talking points. These can also be used for radio announcements, inserted into speeches, or provided to individuals such as pastors or business leaders who may be discussing your project.

If you have a funding source, you may wish to purchase advertising. If there is no funding for paid advertising, public service messages can help spread the word.

Planning and Implementation of Your Project

Are you ready to enlist CHWs in your program's community outreach efforts? If so, read through the following 10-step guide on developing a SNAP outreach project.

Step 1 Describe your project.

Take time to decide what activities will take place. You can start by expanding existing activities. You can also include new activities such as SNAP prescreening.

If you plan to obtain funding, you should include local data to show the need for this project. It is important to present your business case to potential funders.

As you meet with others, your project description will probably change.



Tools & Tips

The time required to develop your project will depend on the complexity of your activities and funding sources. For example, if you need to obtain funding for stipends, travel, or other expenses, develop your timeline with this in mind.

Step 2 Meet with SNAP offices.

Once you have a general idea of your project, contact your local SNAP representatives to schedule a meeting. To find your local SNAP office, please visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/map.htm>. Be prepared to discuss your plans and answer questions. You may wish to include other partners involved with your project in this meeting. If they are not able to join you, you may want to present letters of support.

Below are some questions that you may wish to ask your local or State SNAP office, depending on the nature of your project:

- Has your office participated in the development of a community needs assessment? If yes, can I obtain a copy or speak with someone who worked on the needs assessment?
- Are there any organizations receiving funding through your State outreach or nutrition education plans? If yes, what services are they performing and do you have contact information?
- How could our project complement current SNAP outreach activities conducted by your office or other outreach organizations?
- Have other organizations or volunteer networks contacted your office? Are you currently working with other organizations? If yes, how does their project fit in with what my organization is proposing? Can you share your experiences working with organizations like mine – what worked or didn't work on these projects?
- Are you aware of any organizations that might be interested in helping us with this project?
- What challenges do you face when working with our community?
- Can you provide data that highlight the greatest areas of need in the community? Can you identify areas that need additional outreach efforts?
- Would a SNAP representative be willing to be a primary contact for our program's outreach efforts?
- Would you be able to provide training to our outreach workers on SNAP requirements and procedures?



Tools & Tips

Maintain a close partnership with your local SNAP office. Your SNAP office is a key partner to the success of your project. Assure your SNAP contact that you will keep him or her posted and updated during the development and implementation of your project and training. Exchange contact information.

- Will you be able to provide training materials/modules/lesson plans for our use in training outreach workers (such as those you use for your own workers)?
- What local materials do you have that my organization can use? Can you provide us with a quantity of these materials or, if not, do you have a sample we might use to create our own materials?
- Do you maintain a list of volunteers or know of any organizations that use volunteers?
- Can you identify trusted spokespersons in the community that may be able to help with our project?
- Can your office help collect data to use for evaluation by tracking number of calls after an event, number of applications filed, number approved, or number denied?



Tools & Tips

Resolving project issues is important to the success of any partnership. Make sure to have steps in place to identify and correct problems, such as if a CHW is not correctly filling out a SNAP application form. Let your SNAP contact know how the problem was resolved. As projects evolve, problems often occur and procedures may need to be revised.

Communication

Keep each other informed of project changes, SNAP events that may increase calls or visits to the local office, and lessons learned. Flexibility is a must!

Step 3 Establish a staffing base.

Contact nonprofit organizations in your local community to identify CHWs who can be recruited and trained for SNAP outreach. Here are some community action areas where you might find a diversified group of CHWs:

- Education (preschools, English Language Learners programs, school boards)
- Health (community clinics, hospitals, school nurses)
- Leadership (community-based organizations and labor groups)
- Housing (neighborhood associations)
- Area Agencies on Aging (community-based organizations)



Tools & Tips

Many national organizations have local chapters throughout the country. Contact these national organizations to find their local chapter to ask about their local volunteer networks. A sample list of national organizations can be found on page 11 of this chapter.

Step 4 Materials and meetings.

Materials designed to capture the attention of potential CHWs can be distributed at various offices, meetings, or conferences. Be sure to provide contact information and explain the need for your project ([business case](#)), and various roles individuals and groups can play.

After any meeting, follow up with a letter thanking those who participated and explain next steps. A next step may be to schedule one-on-one meetings with interested CHWs.

Step 5 Training and approvals.

After you have prepared your curriculum, develop your training materials based on the activities that CHWs will be performing. Make sure you develop them around local and State policies. States differ in how they run their programs and these differences can affect how eligibility is calculated. SNAP offices may also be willing to share training materials or prescreening tools used to train their own employees and may be willing to participate in your training sessions.

Your training materials should include written project procedures, such as:

- How to submit signed and dated applications to the SNAP office
- How to obtain SNAP policy clarifications
- How to communicate lessons learned on what is working and not working
- What data must be collected and reported for the project evaluation

Before you begin training, ask your local SNAP office to look over your curriculum and SNAP materials. Other participating partners may also want an opportunity to provide feedback on materials. If your local office makes any changes to your materials, make sure you understand why the changes were made.

Step 6 Conduct training sessions.

Train CHWs to become qualified SNAP outreach providers. Since not all CHWs will speak English, some training will need to occur in their native language. To help them, make sure bilingual partners who understand the material are present at your training sessions. It is also important to have your local SNAP contact present for SNAP eligibility discussions. That way, the contact can respond to technical questions about eligibility requirements and the application process.

Your training sessions might include:

- Basic information about SNAP
- Clarifying the myths surrounding SNAP benefits and the process
- Emphasizing nutrition benefits of SNAP
- Basic interviewing strategies
- Information and practice on conducting an eligibility prescreening
- How to fill out the SNAP application form; practice sessions to understand what questions mean
- Verification documents required for application
- Outreach strategies that work
- Outlining specific procedures to submit completed (signed and dated by applicant) SNAP application forms
- Discussion of who will handle policy and procedural questions
- Reporting requirements, including information and data that need to be reported for project evaluation



Tools & Tips

If you want your project to be successful, adequate training must be provided to outreach providers. Because of the complexity of SNAP regulations, miscalculating a benefit amount during a prescreening can make the certification interview more challenging for the eligibility worker who must explain the discrepancy to the client who trusted you to provide correct information.

When possible, use State/local SNAP information and training materials because they are more precise. This means less development and preparation time, which can cut project costs.

You may wish to work with your local office and partners to establish a formalized training program for CHWs. Some States, like Texas, offer a certification program through colleges.



Tools & Tips

Remember CHWs know their communities. Focus on getting their feedback about community outreach ideas that are practical, acceptable to their audience, simple, and meaningful.

Refine and modify the curriculum as needed after the train-the-trainer sessions. Lessons learned can strengthen your presentation and better prepare your audience.

Providing on-the-job training will strengthen and add credibility to your project. Assign a mentor to work with CHWs for a certain number of hours before awarding the certificate. This will demonstrate to your local office that your CHWs have the skills required to do the job.

Participants attending training should receive a packet of information to reinforce what they learned. The packet might include:

- A binder or folder containing the curriculum, PowerPoint presentation(s), procedures, and reporting materials
- Blank SNAP application forms for training purposes, if available
- Web site locations; this is especially important if applications are filed electronically
- An electronic disk containing the PowerPoint presentation and curriculum

Step 7 Award training certificates.

Upon successful completion of the training program, CHWs should receive a certificate.



Tools & Tips

Establish a database of trained volunteers.

This enables local SNAP workers to contact CHWs when applicants need their assistance.

Partnerships benefit everyone.

Local SNAP workers benefit from the assistance provided by CHWs, CHWs benefit because their clients are receiving nutrition assistance, and applicants benefit by receiving excellent customer service.

Step 8 Provide resources.

When CHWs successfully complete training, provide them with appropriate resources and tools for SNAP community outreach. Some items you may wish to provide are:

- Presentation cards/name tags to identify them as CHWs from your organization
- Office supplies such as clips, staplers, staples, pens, clip boards, etc.
- A binder with contact information, PowerPoint presentation, SNAP application form or Web site location for an online application; supporting information on how to fill out the application form; reporting forms; and instructions for filing or following up on submitted applications.
- "Release of Information" documents. CHWs will provide this document to local SNAP offices showing that the client authorizes the worker to disclose such information as case status and reasons for processing delays or denials.
- [Verification envelopes](#). Verification envelopes list the documents applicants need to obtain in order to get certified for SNAP benefits. Since some documents like rent receipts can easily get lost, the envelope is a good place to store materials and keep them organized.
- Resources available for the project such as flip charts, handouts, or chalk or white boards. Will laptop computers be loaned out? If yes, CHWs may need to sign them out.

Step 9 Publicize the project.

People in your community need to know who you are, what you plan to do, and how to contact you. Can these individuals be directed to a toll-free number or Web site address? Ask partners if you can obtain copies of their materials to which you might add a sticker with additional information on your project. Use your community contacts such as radio or television celebrities. Check out the media section of this toolkit for other ideas.

Step 10 Evaluate the Project.

Find out what is effective in your project. Your budget and activities will determine what evaluation techniques might be needed. See the evaluation section of this toolkit for ideas on how to measure success.

Quick Guide To Prepare a Plan for Funding

A well-written plan can provide the basis for funding requests as well as for any nonmonetary support you are seeking. If your organization intends to request funding from a foundation or other sources, the following are some items you might want to include. These will give a potential funder a clear understanding on how your organization will spend its dollars. These topics should also be covered when seeking partnerships, collaborations, and nonmonetary support.

- **Project description.** Explain who you are targeting and why this project is needed, supporting your description with data. Explain the outreach activities that will be conducted and where these will occur (e.g., schools, homes, clinics, etc.). Note the locality of your planned activities. Describe any current efforts and how the new activities will fit in.
- **Training.** Describe the training needed and frequency of training. For example: “Training will be conducted as needed to update CHWs on new policies, and periodic training will occur every 3 months for new volunteers.” State what role the SNAP local agency might have in the training.
- **Description of roles and responsibilities.** Describe all positions and identify those that will be funded under your project. Document if some CHWs will be donating their time to the project. Also, identify the person with management oversight of your project, and who will resolve issues or disputes. Identify who will screen, select, supervise, train, schedule, and provide recognition for volunteers and other staff. Explain whether volunteers will receive any reimbursements for travel, supplies, etc.
- **Partnerships.** Describe existing partnerships and how they fit in with your project. You may also want to describe efforts to expand your partnership base. If you are conducting a SNAP project, discuss your partnership with your local office.
- **Publicity.** Describe how you will publicize your project. If there are costs for printing or paid advertising, be sure to include them in your budget.
- **Evaluation of activities.** Describe the information you will collect and use to evaluate the project, such as number of project applications submitted, approved, or denied. Explain how this information will be collected and who will collect it. Will it be a paid consultant, a volunteer from a local college or university, or an employee from your organization? Describe the local SNAP office’s role in data collection, if any.
- **Project organization.** Describe how the project fits in with your existing organization. A good way to do this is to modify your group’s organization chart to include your project. Work flow may be important to some funders.
- **Time table or task table.** It should show activities, start and end dates, and person who is responsible for each activity.
- **Funding sources.** Mention the source of any funding for other aspects of your project, and what that funding covers. Identify what the new funding you are seeking will cover. You want to assure the funder that its resources will be used to pay for new, as yet unfunded activities.
- **Budget and budget description.** If you are requesting funding, you should develop your budget. You should also explain how you arrived at the figures by providing a list of assumptions. Funders want confirmation that dollars provided for your project are used for that project.



Tools & Tips

If you are applying for a grant, carefully read through the grant request to make sure you understand the requirements. Submit questions as directed, and follow the instructions. If there are evaluation criteria, be sure to adequately explain how you will meet each criterion. Allow yourself adequate time to put the package together.

It’s always a good idea to let someone proof your proposal to make sure you covered everything and that there are no grammar errors or typos.

List of National Organizations for Possible Partners

African American

100 Black Men of America
 National Association for
 Advancement of Colored People
 National Association of Black Social
 Workers
 National Council of Negro Women,
 Inc.
 National Urban League
 United Negro College Fund

Asian American

Asian and Pacific Islander American
 Health Forum
 Asian American/Pacific Islander
 Nurses Association, Inc.
 Chinese American Citizens Alliance
 National Alliance of Vietnamese
 American Service Agencies
 National Korean American Service &
 Education Consortium
 National Coalition for Asian Pacific
 American Community Development

Hispanic

Hispanic Association of Colleges and
 Universities
 League of United Latin American
 Citizens
 Labor Council of Latin American
 Advancement
 National Alliance for Hispanic Health
 National Council of La Raza
 National Hispanic Council on Aging

Native American

National Congress of American
 Indians
 National Council of Urban Indian
 Health
 National Indian Child Welfare
 Association
 National Indian Council on Aging
 National Indian Education Association
 National Indian Health Board

Rural

National Organization of State Offices
 of Rural Health
 National Rural Funders Collaborative
 National Rural Health Association
 National Rural Housing Coalition
 Rural Community College Alliance
 The National Rural Network

Seniors

AARP Foundation
 Meals on Wheels Association of
 America
 National Association of Nutrition and
 Aging Services Programs
 National Council on Aging
 State Health Insurance Programs
 (SHIP)

SNAP Document Verification Checklist Template

Please consult with your local or State office before finalizing and using this checklist. It is important to find out if the State has an existing document that you can use. If not, work with your State to ensure that you are gathering the information they need. Your form should always state that a case worker may ask for additional documents. You may also want to mention that it is possible for the same document to serve for more than one category, for example, a driver's license can verify identity and address.

SNAP Document Verification Checklist Template

SNAP Document Verification Checklist

To verify your identity

- ☐ Driver's license
- ☐ School or work identification
- ☐ Medical insurance identification
- ☐ Voter's registration card
- ☐ Birth certificate

To verify your address

- ☐ Library card showing address
- ☐ Voter's registration card
- ☐ Utility bills
- ☐ Rent or mortgage receipts showing address
- ☐ Correspondence sent to stated address

To verify your income

(Present Document For Each Income Source)

- ☐ Check stubs (*Confirm number required with local office*)
- ☐ Employer statement (if you get paid in cash or if you do not have your check stubs)
- ☐ Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, or Veteran's Benefits
- ☐ Other Retirement or Disability Benefits
- ☐ Alimony
- ☐ Child support agreement
- ☐ Unemployment compensation
- ☐ Self-employment income (Includes rental income and freelance work; *check to see what form local office is using or provide tax returns*)
- ☐ Other, please specify.

To verify your immigration status

- ☐ Immigration and Naturalization Documents (These are not required if you are not eligible for SNAP and you are only applying for your children who were born in the United States.)

To verify your resources

- ☐ Bank accounts, savings accounts, and/or CD's
- ☐ Stock Shares or bonds
- ☐ Proof of rental properties
- ☐ Other, please specify.

To verify your expenses

- ☐ Rent or mortgage payments
- ☐ Property taxes
- ☐ Insurance on property
- ☐ Utilities receipts (gas, water, electricity, etc.)
- ☐ Child care costs
- ☐ Income summary if child support is deducted from wages or income
- ☐ Other, please specify

Medical expenses deduction (only for households of elderly, age 60 or older, or disabled persons) for expenses not covered by insurance

- ☐ Summary of provided services such as doctor or hospital visits
- ☐ Detailed receipts showing unreimbursed medical expenses
- ☐ Identification from the Medical Assistance Program for persons 65 and older (Medicare) that shows Plan "B" coverage
- ☐ Prescription pill bottles showing cost on label or printout
- ☐ Medical payment agreement
- ☐ Invoices or receipts for medical equipment (including the rental cost)
- ☐ Receipts for transportation and lodging to obtain medical treatment
- ☐ Other, please specify

Senior Outreach

Section I: Understanding Why Seniors Are a Critical Audience

Seniors reflect the diversity of America—age, income, race, ethnicity, and lifestyle. It's important, however, to recognize that this label refers to a group whose ages span more than 30 years. "The Silent Generation," the oldest members of the group, was born between 1925 and 1945. Many of the younger seniors, commonly known as Baby Boomers, were born between 1946 and 1964. Both groups are eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), but in terms of experiences and outlook, they're generations apart, and therefore need to be approached in different ways.

It's fair to say that many seniors expected their "golden years" to be just that... golden. But the retirement years have not been trouble-free for all—some simply can't make ends meet. Millions of seniors are living in poverty or are facing financial hardship because of high medical costs and rising living expenses. Silently suffering, too many of America's oldest citizens are making tough choices—not taking their medications as prescribed, not adjusting the thermostat for heating or cooling, or skipping meals. While hunger in itself is a serious problem, not eating healthy meals often makes existing health conditions worse. The benefits offered by SNAP can help put food on the table and provide seniors with extra dollars to purchase fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat milk products.

What Does This Chapter Hope To Accomplish?

This toolkit section is designed to help address the rising rate of food insecurity among seniors, whom SNAP defines as 60 and older. Our goal is to put a "face" on people who are either coping with hunger over the long term or confronting it for the first time. While many are already enrolled in SNAP, millions are eligible, but have not applied. This section will help you reach both senior generations by:

- Providing a clearer picture of individuals 60 and older, particularly those who could be helped most by SNAP.
- Discussing some of the barriers and myths that prevent seniors from enrolling in SNAP and keep them from putting healthy foods on the table.
- Highlighting ideas to help you reach people who are often overlooked: seniors with disabilities, those raising grandchildren or serving as guardians for other minors, and, finally, seniors who live in rural areas.
- Introducing quick tips and techniques for easily reaching seniors through the community and the media, and by sharing lessons learned from workers in the field.

Differences Among Seniors

Because of the large spread in age between these two "Senior Generations," we need to account for differences in their circumstances and approach them through a variety of strategies. Let's examine three areas:

Education

Before 1970, only one-third of Caucasians and fewer than 10 percent of African-Americans were high school graduates. Over the past 30 years, the percentage of older Americans with high school diplomas skyrocketed. However, the number of Hispanic and Asian seniors with high school diplomas remains



Differences Among Seniors

- Education
- Immigration
- Employment and Technology

low—making it highly probable that they have difficulty speaking or reading comfortably in English. Baby Boomers, on the other hand, are typically well educated.

Immigration

Our Nation has experienced a cultural shift. Hispanics are not simply the largest minority group, but are also the fastest growing. There are key differences, however, between individuals who migrated to America decades ago and more recent arrivals. Members of the Silent Generation typically speak English at home and at work, and more than likely have changed some of their behaviors to fit in. They are generally more comfortable interacting with government agencies and organizations, both inside and outside their community. In contrast, recent immigrants, even when documented, may hesitate to seek services from government agencies. They tend to hold officials in high regard or with suspicion, in turn suppressing their own views. Seniors from other minority backgrounds may function in similar ways. Visit the [Cultural Competency](#) chapter of this toolkit to learn more about outreach to minority audiences.

Employment and Technology

Baby Boomers, especially those born in the 1950s and early 1960s, are most likely still employed and have used technology at their place of business or at home. ATMs, debit cards, automated phone systems, and online banking are familiar. On the other hand, individuals 75 and older may have retired before technology, specifically the Internet, became part of everyday life. These seniors may feel more comfortable getting information through personal contacts, 1-800 numbers, large-print and easy-to-read fact sheets, and other more traditional media channels, such as the nightly news. Seniors who are disabled or who have health issues may need one-on-one assistance from an outreach worker. When possible, offer multiple ways for interested individuals to contact you.

General Outreach Strategies

There are some basic outreach strategies that cut across all audiences. The following are a few guidelines that will be described in more detail, as they relate to low-income seniors, as you go through this chapter:

1. **Know and understand** your [audience](#).
2. **Develop messages** that are simple and that speak to your audience.
3. **Identify and develop partnerships** with organizations that are like-minded.
4. **Distribute information** through partners, media, and events.
5. **Be mindful** of cultural and gender differences.
6. **Use your local resources**, such as phone numbers and/or Web sites of State and local SNAP offices. Check with your local SNAP office before your outreach to make sure it can handle an increase in requests.
7. **Be mindful** of predatory behaviors and distinguish yourself from these.
8. **Build trust and deliver** what you offer with a high level of customer service.



Tips & Tools

As outreach workers, you must understand the literacy level of your audience before asking them to read and interpret brochures and applications.

Getting To Know Your Audience

In getting to know your audience, it's important to first assess where there are differences as well as similarities. Following is a snapshot that compares all seniors with low-income seniors. First, let's discuss what they have in common.

Knowing where a majority of your target audience lives is vital to successful outreach. A majority of older adults live in metropolitan areas. *Of those eligible for SNAP*, 70 percent do. In addition, women outnumber men, and the ratio is highest among adults 80 and older. Finally, seniors in minority groups are more likely to be poor but almost 70 percent of seniors eligible for SNAP are white.¹ These are all important facts to consider as you determine where to spend your resources.

Other considerations are those things that make low-income seniors different from their more financially stable counterparts. See the following table for more details.

Differences Between Seniors Overall and Low-Income Seniors

All Seniors	Low-Income Seniors
Among all seniors, 64 percent live with relatives. ²	Almost 90 percent of poor older adults—87 percent of households with elderly that are eligible for SNAP benefits—live alone or with one other older adult. ³
More than half of all seniors live in nine States (California, Florida, New York, Texas, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, and New Jersey). ⁴	<p>More than half of all seniors eligible for SNAP live in 10 States (New York, Texas, Florida, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, and Georgia).</p> <p><i>California is not included because seniors who receive SSI also receive a standardized amount of cash for food assistance and are not eligible for SNAP benefits.</i></p> <p>Further, one-quarter of all seniors who are eligible for SNAP live in the Southeastern part of the U.S. The Northeast region has the next highest concentration of poor seniors.⁵</p>
Persons over age 80 are a large group in the general population, but many live in institutional housing where they are not eligible for SNAP benefits. ⁶	By age groups, 40 percent of poor seniors are in their 60s, about 30 percent are in the 70s, and the other 30 percent are 80 and older. ⁷

- Leftin, J. & Cunyningham, K. *Profiles of Elderly Persons Eligible for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program*.
- U.S. Census Bureau Newsroom. Facts for Feature: Older Americans Month, May 2008, ONLINE. 2008. U.S. Census Bureau. Available: http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/cb10-ff06.html [25 Aug. 2009]
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- Leftin, J. & Cunyningham, K. *Profiles of Elderly Persons Eligible for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program*.

A Few More Facts About Seniors: Which Seniors Are Most at Risk?

Food insecurity remains a problem that cuts across race, gender, age, and geography. Over 5 million seniors—11.4 percent of all seniors—experienced some form of food insecurity (i.e., were marginally food insecure).⁸ Recently, the Meals on Wheels Association of America funded a study to look at seniors and hunger entitled “The Causes, Consequences, and Future of Senior Hunger in America.” The study found that those seniors at higher risk for food insecurity tend to be:

- **Low-income.** Seniors living at or below the poverty line.
- **Younger seniors.** Individuals under the age of 70 are at higher risk for hunger than their older peers.
- **Minority.** African-Americans and Hispanics/Latinos.
- **Raising a grandchild.** One in five seniors who are living with a grandchild has an increased risk for hunger. This is often because families in these households are already struggling with fewer resources.
- **Less educated.** Individuals without a high school diploma.
- **Living alone.** Are divorced, separated, widowed, or never married.
- **Disabled or requiring support for basic activities.**
- **Renters.** Often face rent increases while living on fixed incomes.
- **Living in the South.** While food insecurity and poverty occur in every State, household incomes in the South continue to lag behind other parts of the country. Seniors living in Mississippi, South Carolina, and Arkansas are at even higher risk of hunger.

8. Ziliak, J.P.; Gundersen, C.; Haist, M. The Causes, Consequences, and Future of Senior Hunger in America. Web site: <http://216.235.203.153/Document.Doc?id=13>

A Community Needs Assessment Can Help You Reach Seniors

While it is important to be mindful of the above information about senior audiences, sometimes the only way you can really know and understand the seniors you are trying to reach is to do a [community needs assessment](#).

Meeting with others who serve older adults will give you a clearer and more accurate picture of your target audience and what is being done in your community. For example, you will learn what each organization is doing, how your program might fit in, what resources (funds, volunteers, facilities, Web sites, etc.) are available, what can be done to remove barriers to SNAP participation, and how you can work together to minimize duplication of efforts and better use limited resources.



Tips & Tools

The [Cultural Competency section](#) of the toolkit provides a step-by-step guide for conducting a community needs assessment.

Networking with other service groups will also:

- Help you identify new partners. For example, you might establish or strengthen relationships with local SNAP offices, State Units on Aging, the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, senior centers or other groups, especially those that receive SNAP funding under the optional State outreach and/or nutrition education plans.
- Help you define and understand your target audience, as well as identify areas of low participation.
- Identify gaps between services and needs and strategies for addressing them.
- Provide opportunities to combine or offer one-stop shopping services. Your organization can team up with other programs to offer a “package” of benefits, rather than marketing each of them separately. For example, low-income seniors who are enrolled in Medicare can qualify for substantial benefits through two other important programs: the Medicare Part D Low-Income Subsidy (LIS) and Medicare Savings Programs (MSPs), which are State Medicaid programs that help with drug costs and cover out-of-pocket health costs that Medicare does not cover. SNAP, LIS, and MSPs have very similar eligibility rules, but all suffer from low participation rates among low-income seniors who are not connected to other benefits.
- Provide opportunities for cross-training of employees. For example, SNAP offices could learn more about your organization and what services you provide. Your employees would learn more about SNAP requirements and [policy](#). Understanding roles and responsibilities may lead to ideas on how to implement new business practices. It also ensures that accurate information is being provided to seniors who may have misinformation about the Program.
- Show where technology could help extend the reach of services, such as creating links to relevant Web sites.
- Reveal tried-and-true suggestions that worked with other programs, for example, demonstration projects such as Combined Application Projects (CAPs). These projects are a creative partnership among the Social Security Administration (SSA), State agencies, and the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to simplify the SNAP application process for recipients of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) who live alone. Under the CAP demonstration, one-person SSI households can file a shortened SNAP application form without having a face-to-face interview at the SNAP office. Data collected from the SSA interview are electronically transferred to the SNAP office for processing.
- Help set goals and measure success (what worked, didn’t work, and lessons learned).



Did You Know?

The Social Security Administration (SSA) and State Medicaid agencies have a new process in which SSA forwards LIS applications to States for MSP (Medicare Secondary Payer) eligibility determinations. State agencies can increase the value of this effort by connecting seniors to the full range of public benefits for which they qualify. In almost every State, the MSP program is administered by the same agency (indeed, often by the same State worker) as SNAP, so it would be highly efficient to use the new process as a tool for signing up eligible Medicare beneficiaries for SNAP.⁹

The Right Mix for Reaching Seniors

Clearly, there is a lot of diversity within the two generations of seniors. Here are some creative ideas for reaching them.

Five Fresh Ideas for Reaching Members of the Silent Generation

1. **Present a True Picture.** Avoid portraying all older seniors as frail or inactive. A new study of seniors 70+ found that, on average, they feel 13 years younger than their actual age. Focus on the benefits of getting older, not the limitations.
2. **Mix It Up.** Since women typically outlive men, show mixed groups of friends, not just couples, in materials. Include pictures with grandchildren.
3. **Serve Those Who Served Their Country.** The majority of men of this generation served in the military. Thousands of women also served as nurses or volunteered with organizations like the American Red Cross and the United Service Organization (USO). Make outreach to veterans' groups, homes, and hospitals part of your strategy.
4. **Go Along for the Ride.** Partner with transportation services that take seniors on errands or to appointments; have materials on hand that include the myths and facts about SNAP benefits.
5. **Throw a Great Party.** Host social events where people mix and mingle. Make it fun by having activities, games, food, and entertainment, and provide information about SNAP. Putting SNAP information in a game format like BINGO, crossword puzzles, or even a "true/false" quiz is fun and helps get your message across in a memorable way.



Tips & Tools

Invite staff from your local SNAP office to attend and help with prescreenings, filling out application forms, and/or scheduling appointments.

Outreach workers or volunteers who will be completing SNAP application forms should be trained in how to fill out the form. If applicants submit applications that are not filled out correctly, it not only creates problems for the customers but also for the local SNAP offices. In addition, it can undermine the trust and relationship between the customer and the outreach worker or organization.

Five Fresh Ideas for Reaching Baby Boomers

1. **Keep It Short. Keep It Simple.** Boomers also find themselves as "card carrying" members of the sandwich generation—providing for older adult parents while taking care of children at home. Place information in venues that they normally visit, like the grocery store or pharmacy waiting area. They might not be eligible but may know of someone who is.
2. **Showcase Diversity.** Immigrants represent 17 percent of all Baby Boomers. Connect with communities and organizations that serve immigrant and non-English-speaking households.
3. **Go Online.** Nearly three-fourths of Baby Boomers go online at least once a month. Tap into sites like AARP Foundation's online community or senior-oriented social networking sites.
4. **Forget Labels.** Boomers view themselves as young and vibrant and typically won't respond to anything aimed at "seniors." Resist using this label and other age-related expressions, like "golden years."
5. **Remember the Workplace.** Many are still actively involved in their careers or have returned to the workplace as part-timers. Human Resources directors are generally willing to provide helpful information to employees.



Recipe for Success

"Seniors are harder to reach because they are more isolated, often live alone, and don't have anyone to help them navigate the SNAP enrollment process. They are also more mistrustful of giving out personal information and are potentially too proud to ask for government assistance."

Celia Hagert, Senior Policy Analyst, Center for Public Policy Priorities

The Right Mix for Reaching Seniors

Five Fresh Ideas for Reaching Seniors With Disabilities

1. **Join Others.** Form partnerships and provide materials to local groups that serve disabled communities, including individuals with low vision (Lighthouse International), limited hearing (Hearing Loss Association of America), and mobility (Easter Seals). Don't forget that help is a two-way street. It is important to recruit volunteer outreach workers from these agencies as well.
2. **Get Buy-In From Retailers.** Ask grocery stores, and stores that sell medical equipment and supplies (such as wheelchairs and walkers), if they will put up posters and provide sample SNAP promotional materials.
3. **Seek Aid From Nurses.** Meet with rehabilitation facilities, dialysis centers, and local chapters of the Visiting Nurses' Association or Meals on Wheels groups to reach seniors who are recently disabled and may be considering support services for the first time.
4. **Be Part of a Road Show.** Make a list of health-related support groups aimed at seniors, such as those focusing on diabetes, arthritis, low vision, prostate or breast cancer, and stroke—and offer to make mini-presentations about SNAP and its benefits.
5. **Consider Furry Friends.** According to Meals on Wheels, about 60 percent of seniors who receive their services live with pets. Target organizations and veterinarians that provide discounted services for seniors, such as the Humane Society.



Tips & Tools

Volunteer to host a “meet and greet” event with organizations serving seniors in your community. A good place to start is with the local Area Agency on Aging to see what services are provided and how your agency might fit in.

Your local SNAP office is also an important partner and may attend. Also, your SNAP office might be able to direct you to other agencies in your community.

As part of your planning, take time to review the [Administration on Aging's](#) policies that guide outreach programs aimed at seniors. These guidelines cover nutrition services, home-delivered meals, guidelines for paying volunteers, and organizing community service programs.



Recipe for Success

“We partner with about 480 agencies. That’s the secret for our food bank...people go into other agencies because they don’t have enough rent money, utilities, or they have a legal problem...”

Sandy Hinojos, Community Food Bank, Tucson, AZ

The Right Mix for Reaching Seniors

Five Fresh Ideas for Reaching Seniors Who Are Guardians

1. **Take It Back to School.** If you live in one of the areas (typically in the South) where grandparents raising children is more common, partner with your local school district to distribute information through school events and staff. Make sure to include PTA meetings, school meal service directors and child nutrition professionals, school counselors, school nurses, and athletic coaches.
2. **Work With the Professionals.** Partner with your local SNAP office to train workers from key organizations such as visiting nurses and registered dietitians who are affiliated with your local county office. Educate them about the nutrition benefits of SNAP and how to apply. You may also ask them to make referrals to your organization for budgeting and/or prescreenings.
3. **Build Your Own Village.** Contact programs for foster parents and grandparents, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and other mentoring programs to help get information out. Keep summer camps and recreation programs in mind, especially those aimed at low-income families. Area Agencies on Aging often sponsor Grandparents Raising Grandchildren programs.
4. **Stay In Step With the Seasons.** Participate in annual events such as an end-of-summer school supply drive, “Back to School Night,” fall coat giveaway, winter Angel Tree gift exchange, and spring registration for summer camps and recreation programs. Ask to distribute a one-page factsheet or to set up an information booth or table at events that parents/guardians may attend.
5. **Put It In a Backpack.** Send information home with children who receive free or reduced-price lunch. You may want to consider timing this for the beginning of the school year or at the end of grading periods as children may begin to live with a guardian mid-school year.

Addressing Barriers & Challenges

What Prevents Seniors From Enrolling in SNAP?

The majority of seniors who are potentially [eligible](#) for SNAP do not participate. There are many reasons why—for a more detailed list, review the [Ten Myths and Barriers](#). From USDA research reports (see [Resources Section](#) for complete listing) and first-hand experience, we know some of the reasons why seniors do not participate in SNAP. By each reason below, a brief talking point is provided. Consider these “mini-scripts” to help you overcome the word “No.”

Talking Points to Address Concerns About Applying for SNAP Benefits

Welfare stigma

For many in the Silent Generation, relying on “welfare” or any type of public assistance is not acceptable. This generation of “self-sacrifice” was raised to be independent and self-reliant. They don’t want to “lose face” in front of their peers.

RESPONSE

You worked hard and the taxes you paid helped to create SNAP. Now it’s time to let it help you buy the healthy foods you like to eat.

Embarrassment

Seniors believe that family members and friends would view them differently and might think that they are not able to care for themselves. Plus, many seniors would be ashamed to be seen at the welfare office applying for benefits or using the EBT card at the grocery store.

RESPONSE

The local office is not always the only place you can apply for SNAP. Some local offices visit senior centers or other sites to take applications. There are other ways to apply — you can mail or fax your application, and in some places you can apply online. If you mail, fax, or submit your application online, you may request a telephone interview with the SNAP worker who is handling your application. You may also authorize a friend or relative to take your application form to the local office. This designated person can also be interviewed by the SNAP worker.

Remember: Everyone needs help now and then. Some people rely on visiting nurses or other services after an illness. There are also transportation services for seniors who can no longer drive. Plus, everyone over age 65 gets support from Medicare, and Medicaid helps people who are disabled, including seniors. Receiving SNAP benefits to buy all sorts of food such as whole grains, fruits and vegetables, and low-fat dairy products is no different.



Tips & Tools

Partnerships work.

Encourage your SNAP office to have a designated person who assists seniors with applications.

Preparation is the key to success.

Be prepared and have appropriate materials such as your business card, SNAP office locations, phone numbers and business hours, informational brochures, or SNAP application forms with you. Your goal is to present sufficient information to help people make an informed decision whether or not to apply for SNAP benefits.

Application filing.

Encourage seniors without all of the required forms to fill out the first page of the application form. This starts the application process.



Recipe for Success

“Our partnership with a tax preparation organization has been very successful with seniors. While the tax preparers are completing their taxes, they’re able to see if they might be eligible for SNAP benefits. Right then, on the spot, they help the seniors complete the application. It works very well.”

Susan Craig, SNAP, Kansas

Addressing Barriers & Challenges

Sense of Failure

Regardless of which generation they come from, older adults who have worked all their lives view needing SNAP benefits as a failure and think others feel the same way.

RESPONSE

Lots of people, young and old, are having financial difficulties, especially in this economic climate. Tough times require new solutions.

Culture

Hispanic and Asian cultures, in particular, believe that family members, not the government, should care for aging parents and grandparents.

RESPONSE

Family members can continue to help you. SNAP is a program that can add to the help you receive from your family. Receiving SNAP benefits lets you purchase all kinds of foods such as fruits and vegetables. Having those extra food dollars gives you more money to spend on other things such as medicine, utilities, activities, and personal items.

Difficulty completing an application

For many low-income seniors, difficulty can mean different things:

- Transportation may not be readily available, especially for those adults in rural areas or who have mobility issues.
- Application forms may be long and complicated. These forms may have small print, which makes them difficult to read.
- Long waits at the local SNAP office or waiting in a noisy lobby may discourage some from applying. Many seniors do not know that they can be interviewed by telephone or at other locations such as senior centers. They also are not aware that they can designate an authorized representative to take the application form to the local office. This representative can be interviewed by the SNAP worker on their behalf.
- Acronyms and jargon used by the local office worker may be difficult to understand and, as a result, the applicant might not understand what documentation must be submitted. Applicants may also be hard of hearing and may have difficulty understanding the worker.

RESPONSE

*I can help you or I will call my contact at the SNAP office.
(If there is a particular organization in the area that helps seniors apply, provide the contact information or offer to make a call.)*



Recipe for Success

“We hold social events with ethnic communities (Jewish, Greek, Italian) with food and music. When they get there, we give them food baskets that include information on SNAP. It’s more of an indirect way of reaching them.”

Ilene Marcus, Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, New York City



Did You Know?

Important 2008 Farm Bill Changes

The Farm Bill eliminated the cap on the dependent care deduction. For seniors paying for child care or adult care, this means they can now deduct the entire cost of the care. For example, a working senior might have to pay adult day care fees for his or her spouse in order to remain employed. Another example would be working seniors with custody of their grandchildren who require childcare services.

Saving is encouraged by excluding tax-preferred retirement accounts and education accounts. Not counting the value of these accounts will help seniors.

What Are the Benefits of Partnerships in Reaching Seniors?

Like most individuals, when seniors seek a particular service, they call or visit the appropriate agency or organization. But when they have multiple needs, as many do, they may not know where to start. Partnerships with organizations that are trusted and credible messengers, such as the local Office on Aging or places of worship, can help seniors take the first step to getting the help they need. The ability to access and choose adequate, safe, and healthy food is essential if older adults are to remain independent at home in the community. Geographic food access plays an important role in determining the quality and quantity of foods older persons are able to purchase in their neighborhoods. The organization may be able to offer a “package” of benefits because it handles multiple programs or it may make referrals to other agencies. Encourage your partners to submit a referral document or to make a phone call while the senior is with them. That way, the senior who may have hearing, transportation, or other issues will not have to initiate the contact.

Together, partnerships:

- Address community issues concerning their target audiences. This can be accomplished through a [community needs assessment](#). The assessment will also show you which organizations are like-minded and who will make the strongest partners.
- Can make referrals to SNAP offices or other community organizations or distribute informational materials.
- Provide opportunities for one-stop shopping. Being able to apply for more than one type of benefit at a time makes it easier for potential applicants to apply for SNAP.
- Provide prescreening services which can show the potential applicant an estimated amount of the SNAP benefit in terms of dollars he or she might receive.
- Provide use of facilities for outreach efforts such as distribution of materials, prescreenings, events, etc.
- Provide nutrition education counseling and educational resources that are designed to improve the consumption of healthful foods and physical activity that are age appropriate. These educational resources reinforce the importance of a nutritious diet and regular physical activity in achieving and maintaining a healthy body weight for older adults.
- Enhance coordination for planning and implementing projects or campaigns by pooling resources and minimizing duplication of efforts.



Potential Partners

- SNAP Office
- Local Office on Aging
- Local houses of worship or other faith-based organizations
- Senior recreation centers
- Hospitals and health clinics
- Home health agencies and visiting nurse programs
- Senior advocacy groups (AARP Foundation, National Council on Aging)
- Nutrition programs for seniors (congregate meal sites, home delivered meals, Meals on Wheels, Feeding America)
- USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture
- Association of State Nutrition Network Administration
- Community Action Agencies
- Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), Senior Corps programs
- Medicare/Medicaid managed care organizations
- Public housing authorities
- Volunteer groups (foster grandparents, telephone reassurance programs, etc.)
- Adult day care facilities
- Service organizations (American Red Cross, Salvation Army, Goodwill)
- Civic organizations (Lion's Club, Rotary Club, Masons, Kiwanis, and others)
- Caregiver support groups through Area Agencies on Aging, faith-based groups, etc.
- Local libraries
- Public transportation authorities
- Labor unions
- Unemployment offices
- Grocery stores or local farmers' markets
- Radio “Community Spotlight” programs
- Humane Society, pet rescue organizations

In conducting outreach to seniors, participation in community collaborations can:

- Ensure that this often physically and financially vulnerable population benefits from efficiencies in cost, resources, and time.
- Bring outreach efforts where seniors or their caregivers live, work, and relax.
- Improve outreach to hard-to-reach subgroups such as those who are homebound, low-literate, and non-English speakers.
- Capitalize on the trusting relationships many organizations have with their older members.

One of the most important benefits of building partnerships is that collaborators can become “ambassadors” for your agency and its programs and services. This is particularly important when working with the older seniors whom, research shows, most often rely on word-of-mouth and trusted messengers when making important decisions.

In short, partnerships and collaborative activities will allow your organization to reach more seniors in need of nutrition assistance than it ever could on its own. For more information on forming partnerships in general, see the [Partnerships section](#) of this toolkit.



Tips & Tools

Consider working with the State to develop a new outreach plan or strengthen the existing one. Check out [SNAP's State Outreach Plan Guidance](#).

How Can Partnerships Help You Reach Caregivers?

Age and the aging process cause seniors to need more support and services than at any other time in their lives. Caregivers, arguably, shoulder most of the responsibility associated with meeting that need. Since caregivers frequently have first-hand experience in helping their loved ones, the right partnerships can greatly enhance your ability to reach seniors. Caregivers are typically younger than the people they care for, may be working, and have different daily routines, lifestyles, and interests. So, the best opportunities to promote SNAP benefits to caregivers will most likely rest with the following types of organizations:

- Major local employers
- Hospitals/health clinics
- Senior advocacy groups
- Local houses of worship or area clergy groups
- Adult day care centers
- Medicaid-managed care organizations
- Caregiver support groups

Partnership Agreement Letter Template

[DATE]
[NAME]
[TITLE]
[BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION]
[ADDRESS]
[CITY], [STATE] [ZIP CODE]

Dear Mr./Ms. [NAME]:

Millions of American seniors live alone, have difficulty providing themselves with a steady supply of food, and experience some degree of hunger. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (formerly the Food Stamp Program) is the first line of defense against this problem. In our city/county up to [X] seniors are potentially eligible to receive these nutrition assistance benefits every month.

On behalf of [ORGANIZATION NAME], I am writing to invite you to lend your support to [STATE/CITY/TOWN'S] SNAP outreach efforts to seniors by *[Describe the request — an activity you would like the organization to participate in, such as: hosting a health fair or prescreening event; volunteering; distributing informational flyers; promoting events; etc.]*.

The goal of this outreach effort is to ensure that seniors who are eligible for SNAP know about the program and are able to access benefits. Our organization is helping to promote the nutrition benefits of SNAP to seniors and their caregivers.

[Provide local information on what your organization is doing and whom you plan to target in your campaign.]

We hope you will join us in supporting [ORGANIZATION or COALITION NAME's] outreach efforts. We would be honored to work with you. With your support, we are confident that we can reach more of [CITY/STATE's] senior citizens not yet enrolled in SNAP. By participating *[List benefits to organization such as: reinforce position as community leader, provide opportunity for positive media exposure, offer community service opportunities, etc.]*.

I will contact you in the next few days to further discuss the vital role you can play in helping our community. In the meantime, feel free to contact me at [PHONE NUMBER] should you have any questions. I have also enclosed additional information on SNAP benefits for your review. Again, we hope you can join us in supporting this important effort, and look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

[NAME]
[TITLE]
Enclosures

Section III: Communicating Effectively With Older Adults

What Information Sources Do Seniors Trust Most?

When it comes to issues related to health or well-being, older adults place high value on the advice and opinion of the people they know. This trend increases with age, with Silent Generation seniors placing the most trust in interpersonal sources. Such sources include health care and other professionals or trained personnel, family members, faith-based organizations, and friends.

In community outreach, these sources are commonly referred to as “trusted messengers” and are excellent channels for promoting the issue of hunger and food insecurity and the availability of SNAP benefits.

The top five most frequently used sources that seniors go to for information:

1. Interpersonal sources, such as health care providers and professionals, friends, and family
2. Newspapers and magazines
3. Television
4. Radio
5. Internet

For information about social services, Silent Generation seniors tend to turn to print sources as a primary reference, specifically newspapers, magazines, and books. While there are issues with literacy among older seniors, those that do read comfortably often use their local libraries for information about general health issues.

- This age group also tends to watch more television than others, especially during the day, so that remains one of the top ways they get health information. The same is true for radio, where senior listenership to talk radio is significant.
- Although Internet use is far less frequent among low-income seniors than it is among moderate- to high-income seniors, it is a promising medium for promoting SNAP, especially to caregivers and the youngest members of the group. Keep in mind that Baby Boomers are tech savvy, having used computers in the workplace and at home. As a result, they often turn to the Internet for health information.
- Although older seniors use the Internet to a much lesser extent, when they do use it, it’s often at their local libraries. When seniors go online, the majority do so to locate general health information, although they will also seek out information through other sources. For Baby Boomers, on the other hand, the Internet is generally more trusted than traditional media.



Recipe for Success

As the Internet is becoming increasingly popular across all age groups, we encourage you to “optimize” any press releases you may distribute, in addition to doing a traditional press release. This means doing certain things that make it stand out online. For specific tips on how to optimize a press release, check out the [Media Relations](#) chapter. Does your agency have a Web page? If so, why not link to other agencies? If not, why not work with your partners to develop a Web site?

How Can I Tell if My Outreach Materials Are Appropriate for Seniors?

The good news is that older people, particularly Silent Generation seniors, are readers. In fact, they are largely responsible for keeping newspapers in business! Baby Boomers also read information on the Internet. But as people age, changes in their memory and physical condition can limit their ability to understand information. For example, seniors may have some difficulty:

- Learning information quickly, such as understanding charts and graphs or comparing pieces of information
- Reading a page that is in small print and filled with information. It is important to use large print and to keep a fair amount of white space on the page
- Remembering important information when it is mixed in with information that is not important
- Handling small documents
- Turning pages, especially on glossy or thin paper

How Do I Create Materials That Reflect the Different Cultures and Ethnicities Within the Senior Community Where I Work?

The [Cultural Competency](#) chapter addresses the importance of creating materials that are culturally and linguistically competent. The same holds true for the senior population. As a rule, materials should be tailored to reflect the cultural background of the intended audience. This can be achieved through graphics and photographs, and by creating in-language materials for non-English speakers.

Is There a Way To Test Materials To Make Sure They Appeal to Older Adults?

Yes! That's where your community partners can help. Ask your experts to review draft materials and point out problem areas.



Tips & Tools

Your community partner may be using a flier or brochure that has space for you to add your program information. Also, check with your local SNAP office and see if they have a local toll-free number or Web site, and direct people there.

How Do I Know if My Writing Is Appropriate for Seniors?

Your writing is appropriate for seniors if it:¹⁰

- **Is simple and to the point.** Use clear and familiar words. Omit unnecessary words and jargon. In other words, say what you mean. You are presenting facts to help your audience make an informed decision. Also, be sure to keep literacy levels in mind as you develop your materials. You may want to consider using an online tool to help you keep the literacy level below grade 7.
- **Uses real-life, relevant examples.** These can help the reader build on what he or she already knows about a topic.
- **Uses pictures to help present the information.** For example, pictures of a SNAP application form might be helpful to show your audience where to sign it.
- **Limits key points and action steps.** Make your message brief, with no more than five points, and use an active voice. For example, “Call to make an appointment” is better than saying, “You can make an appointment by calling.”
- **Repeats main points multiple times.** This focuses attention on what is important and will help older adults recall information. A good rule of thumb:
 - Introduce what you are going to say.
 - Say it.
 - Repeat what you said.

How Do I Know if My Graphic Design Is Appropriate?

Your graphic design is appropriate if it:¹²

- **Uses short sentences.** Short sentences are often easier for seniors to digest.
- **Avoids stereotypes.** Know your audience. Make sure pictures and graphics represent the audience you are trying to reach.
- **Is printed on standard 8-1/2" x 11" paper.** Resist printing smaller brochures or leaflets. Arthritis and other ailments often make smaller materials harder for seniors to hold and manipulate.
- **Uses simple fonts and large type.** Make sure your font is free of fancy loops. Use fonts that are easy to read such as Times New Roman and Georgia. Avoid novelty typefaces, like Bodoni or Chiller. Similarly, text is easier to read when it is at least 13- or 14-point.
- **Has plenty of white space and bold, contrasting colors.** Empty space on a page provides a natural place for eyes to rest and refocus. To older eyes, yellows, blues, and greens appear to blend in with the background when next to one another. However, some organizations use black type on yellow paper because it reduces glare.

10. National Institute on Aging. Making Your Printed Health Materials Senior Friendly, ONLINE. 2008. National Institute on Aging. Available: <http://www.nia.nih.gov/healthinformation/publications/srfriendly.htm> [25 Aug. 2009].



Writing for the Internet

Because the Internet is a trusted source of information for the largest segment of the senior population, Baby Boomers, you may want to post fliers, forms, or general information on your organization's Web site – particularly if you want to reach caregivers. Use the tips above as a general guide, and keep these in mind especially for the Internet:¹¹

- **Main points** should be listed at the top of the Web page, so visitors don't have to scroll down.
- **Limit paragraphs** to 30 words. This creates additional white space.
- **Use one idea per sentence** and keep sentences under 17 words.
- **Be direct.** The Web is friendly. Use “we” and “you” instead of “the applicant,” “the client,” and so forth.

11. AskOxford.com. Better Writing: One Step Ahead: Writing for the Internet, ONLINE. 2009. Oxford Dictionary. Available: <http://www.askoxford.com/betterwriting/osa/internet/?view=uk> [25 Aug. 2009].

12. National Institute on Aging. Making Your Printed Health Materials Senior Friendly, ONLINE. 2008. National Institute on Aging. Available: <http://www.nia.nih.gov/healthinformation/publications/srfriendly.htm> [25 Aug. 2009].

Event Planning for Senior Audiences

What Do I Need To Consider When Planning an Event or Activities for Seniors?

One fun way to introduce the senior community to SNAP, regardless of age, is through a planned event or activity. Health fairs, grocery stores, and senior centers may be good locations for events. Don't forget to include the caregiver audience and those who influence seniors in your promotional efforts.

Here are a few things to consider as you plan your event:

- **What type of event are you considering?** Health fair, grocery store with nutrition education providers and prescreening services, senior center, other?
- **Define audience when appropriate**, as not all events are for all seniors.
- **What is your budget?**
- **What type of equipment**, materials (grocery bags/cart filled with food), banners, etc. will you need?
- **What will your publicity be?** How will your event be announced? What media sources will you use? When will promotion begin? Will you use the Internet?
- **Whom can your organization partner with** to share costs and materials, or to provide volunteers, etc.?
- **Make sure everyone has a clear understanding of their roles** and responsibilities. Identify an event leader.
- **Make a contact list** for those who will be working on the event.
- **What time of day will you hold the event?** Rush-hour traffic, trouble seeing at night, and safety concerns may keep many seniors off the road after dusk. On the other hand, those who rely on caregivers or friends for transportation may be able to attend only after the normal workday ends or on weekends.
- **Keep the season and weather in mind** when choosing when to hold the event, and whether it will be held indoors or outside.
- **Food?** Keep in mind that many seniors have medical conditions that limit certain foods, including those high in sugar and sodium. In addition, if your budget is tight, a local restaurant or nonprofit, such as the local Diabetes or Heart Association, university, or SNAP nutrition education provider may be willing to fund the food as part of a healthy cooking demonstration.
- **Evaluation of event?** Are there any reports to complete? Make sure someone is keeping track of attendance, applications requested or completed, and other important information. Consider developing a brief survey (no more than 10 questions) to find out what people thought of the event and ways to improve it. It's the best way to know for sure if your event was a success! You can also use this sample evaluation form.



SNAP Offices and the Media

Be sure to advise your local SNAP office if you plan to host an event or conduct any media outreach. It is important that they be prepared for an increase in calls or visits. In addition, it is helpful if you provide them with a list of messages or media materials you plan to use. That way, local offices can better serve callers and/or visitors.

If possible, partner with the local SNAP office. Local offices may have materials that you can give out and may be willing to send local spokespeople or workers to the event.

Event Planning for Senior Audiences

Choosing a Location

Since it is likely that some in your audience will need assistance, you will want to consider:

- **Wheelchair accessibility.** Does your event site have ramps, elevators, and other accommodations?
- **Restrooms.** Are they nearby and available to people with problems moving around?
- **What transportation services** will be available, if any?
- **Make sure hallways are well-lit** and can accommodate wheelchairs and walkers, and that floors are free of trash or loose rugs and mats.
- **If a mobile van for health screenings,** nutrition education, or SNAP prescreenings will be there, where will it be parked, and how will waiting lines be handled?

Setting Up an Event (day of or several days before event):

- **Check in with partners.**
- **Distribute contact list.**
- **Materials:** Do you have all the materials you need, such as name tags, forms, or pencils and pens? Practical “give-away” promotional items are often popular with seniors. Items might include grocery pad magnets, key chains with mini-flashlights, and refrigerator photo frames.
- **Booth location:** Schedule a walkthrough of the location to double check details, such as placement of electrical outlets, if needed.
- **Evaluation tool:** If you have a survey to distribute, make sure you have enough copies.

Day of Event:

- Arrive early to check out booth, or to hold a quick pre-event meeting.
- Use plenty of signage and have extra volunteers on hand to help with directions and answer questions.
- People working on the event should understand roles and responsibilities, and should have a point of contact in case more help is needed or to resolve issues.
- Check equipment to make sure it is working.
- Expect surprises! No matter how well you plan, unexpected things happen.
- Consider standing a short distance away from your table to allow hesitant people to browse your information without feeling pressured. Approach them when they appear to be looking around for someone and thank them for stopping by when they move on.



Tips & Tools

For more information about how to plan a successful event, please see the [Events](#) chapter.

How Do I Promote SNAP to the Media?

The Media chapter provides proven techniques and tips for working with the media. This includes how to determine which media professionals to contact and when, as well as how to communicate your message through:

- Interviews
- Media advisories
- Press releases, both traditional and optimized
- Community calendar listings
- Public service announcements (visit www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach for ready-made PSAs)



Recipe for Success

“You can send press releases, purchase advertisement space and place your event in our community calendar, and after a while you’re sure to meet with some success. But nothing, nothing can match the impact of a great story.”

Reporter, Senior Beacon Newspaper,
Washington, DC

Sample Community Calendar Listing

If you’re 60 or older, and thinking about how to make ends meet, you may qualify for extra help with food through [State’s] Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. On [date/time], the [organization] will host a free 1-hour information session at [address]. Friendly volunteers look forward to talking with you and helping you with the paperwork to apply. Call 1-800-XXX-XXXX to learn more or to RSVP. If you are interested in SNAP, ask us what papers you should bring.

How Do I Communicate Effectively With Caregivers?

A caregiver is anyone who provides help to another person in need. The person receiving care may have a condition such as dementia, cancer, or brain injury, or he or she might just need help with basic daily tasks such as:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| • House cleaning and maintenance | • Paying bills |
| • Grocery or other shopping | • Taking medicine |
| • Cooking | • Bathing |
| • Transportation | • Dressing |
| | • Using the toilet |

Caregivers do not fit one description. They can be volunteers or paid employees with a social service or health care agency. Caregivers also can be family members who may or may not reside with the senior or friends.

Whether the caregiver is family, a friend, or a paid aide, the demands of caring for an older adult or aging parent are many, and finding where and how to get services can be frustrating.

Caregivers typically have influence on the decisions that seniors make. Chances are, seniors considering SNAP will seek the advice of a caregiver, if there is one, or a trusted friend. The type of information the caregiver will need is the same type the senior needs.



Authorized Representatives

A senior may wish to designate an authorized representative during the application process.

An authorized representative could:

- submit an application on behalf of a SNAP participant
- attend a certification interview
- do grocery shopping for SNAP participant

The authorized representative can be the same person or two different individuals.

Who Are our Nation's Caregivers?

Most Americans will be a caregiver to a family member or friend—sometimes called “informal caregivers”—at some point during their lives. Altogether, informal caregivers provide the majority of the long-term care in the United States. As you plan your outreach to caregivers, first take some time to familiarize yourself with the nature of that audience and demographic. Understanding the typical profile of a caregiver will be very useful in targeting your outreach efforts. Following are some characteristics of caregivers today:

- The majority of caregivers are women.
- Most caregivers are middle-aged, and some of them may even be struggling with their own health
- Many caregivers are Baby Boomers (aged 50-64) who are actively employed, working either full time or part time.

How Can I Influence the Influencers?

When communicating with caregivers, remember they:

- Are looking for answers and services that can help the senior.
- May be concerned about financial costs.
- May be limited on time. Most caretakers are typically short on time and are pulled in many directions. Some may be working or raising their own children.
- Are interested in the “process” of applying for SNAP benefits and how to make this process most efficient.
- Walk a fine line as they try to preserve the dignity of those in their care who may not agree with the decisions being made, especially about applying for SNAP or other public assistance. This balance cannot be overstressed.



Communicating with Caregivers about SNAP

When communicating to caregivers about SNAP, it will be important to:

- **Acknowledge the important role** of the caregiver and show understanding of the responsibility involved.
- **Stress your concern** for the senior and commitment to making the process as simple as possible.
- **Clearly lay out the eligibility rules** and guidelines. Eligibility rules for elderly and disabled persons are different.
- **Reassure the caregiver** that there are no hidden costs to the senior or responsible party, and that applying for SNAP does not require multiple appointments. Be sure to cover telephone interviews and authorized representatives.
- **Provide caregivers with examples** of how to file SNAP applications– drop off at local office, mail, fax, email in some States, or by authorized representative.
- **Refer caregivers to outreach workers** who can provide one-on-one application assistance such as filling out the form, prescreening for benefits, gathering the verification documents, or sitting in on the interview.
- **Provide examples** of how SNAP benefits can be used if the senior no longer cooks at home. Explain that the senior can authorize someone to do the grocery shopping.

Where Are the Best Places To Distribute SNAP Materials to Caregivers?

Here are a few cost-effective media outlets and “communication spots” for reaching older adults, caregivers, and other individuals with information about SNAP benefits for seniors. They are not ranked in any particular order.

- Local Area Office on Aging
- Outreach/nutrition education coalitions in local communities
- Community centers
- Senior transportation services
- Senior center activities
- Internet (ask to link to partners’ Web sites and offer them template introductory language)
- Hospitals, doctors’ offices, or health department
- Pharmacy waiting areas (consider asking pharmacies to include a SNAP message on bags or forms attached to prescription bags discussing medications)
- Faith-based groups or houses of worship
- Grocery stores or farmers’ markets
- Mall walker programs
- Free television community event postings
- Free radio public service announcements on talk radio
- Barbershops/hair salons
- Daycare centers
- School PTA meetings
- Health fairs or events
- Library kiosks, community bulletin boards and/or newsletters
- Fitness centers, especially those that offer classes tailored to people over age 40
- “Penny saver” community advertisements



Tips & Tools

Having a contact at a local SNAP office who specializes in serving seniors is a win-win situation. Explore this possibility if you are involved in developing State plans.

SNAP: Special Services



SNAP: Special Services

Disaster Outreach

Learn about Disaster SNAP and how it differs from the regular Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Review 10 easy steps to help your organization plan for outreach before a disaster strikes.

Disaster Outreach

What are disaster SNAP benefits and how does the program work?

After a natural or man-made disaster occurs and a Presidential declaration of disaster with a provision for individual assistance has been made, State agencies can request approval from the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to activate disaster SNAP benefits and provide temporary food assistance to households. FNS approves operation of disaster SNAP benefits once grocery stores are operational and telecommunications and electricity have been restored. Disaster SNAP benefits are delivered on Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards, similar to regular SNAP benefits, and require telephones and electricity for redemption. Generally, States request and FNS approves operation of disaster SNAP benefits a week or more after a disaster has occurred.

Disaster SNAP benefits help people buy food when they are experiencing economic hardships as a result of the disaster (loss of jobs, loss of food because of power outages, damages to home and personal possessions, etc.). Although every State agency maintains a general disaster SNAP plan for use in time of disaster, State agencies do tailor disaster benefit policies and procedures to fit the community's specific needs following each disaster, so every disaster SNAP program is unique.

How do disaster SNAP benefits differ from SNAP?

Disaster SNAP benefits are different from SNAP in some important ways:

- Families who are not normally eligible for SNAP may be eligible for disaster SNAP benefits. During the eligibility process, a household's short-term, disaster-related expenses are considered.
- Students, strikers, noncitizens and people subject to work requirements are not barred from disaster SNAP benefits as they are from SNAP. Rules surrounding verification, income and resources are relaxed.
- Recipients receive the maximum SNAP benefit for their household size.
- The period to apply for disaster SNAP benefits is short, generally one week.
- State agencies may operate mass application sites at fairgrounds, stadiums or other easily accessible locations that can serve large populations. For very small disasters, State agencies may provide disaster SNAP benefits out of social services offices. All applications for disaster SNAP benefits are distributed to prospective clients and collected at these sites.

How are ongoing SNAP participants aided in the disaster SNAP benefits program?

Aid to SNAP participants will depend upon the disaster. Your State agency may decide to issue replacement benefits for lost or damaged food. Additionally, a supplement or additional benefits may be provided to ensure participants receive the maximum level of benefits for their household size. Sometimes these benefits are paid automatically – in other cases, participants need to complete an affidavit attesting to disaster losses to qualify.

Why should my agency conduct outreach during disasters?

Since each disaster SNAP plan and operation is unique and many participants are first-time applicants, your agency must be prepared to clearly communicate what benefits are available, who is eligible, how to apply, and how to use SNAP benefits. Because disaster SNAP benefits generally operate for a one-week period, providing timely and detailed information is essential.

In addition, SNAP participants may need to know how to verify food loss for replacement benefits, how to obtain supplemental benefits, or whether or not benefits will be automatically replaced.

Because the days following a disaster are often chaotic, news about disaster SNAP benefits might be overshadowed by other disaster-related issues, or misinformation might be circulated. Ongoing outreach is essential to correcting misperceptions and providing factual information to disaster victims about the nutrition benefits to which they may be entitled.

Why should my agency partner with community and faith-based organizations during disasters?

Some disaster victims will turn to trusted organizations in the community for information and help. Affected people may already be interacting with these organizations for other needs, such as clothing, shelter, or medical care. These organizations are in a position to help your agency provide accurate information about disaster SNAP benefits to potentially eligible individuals.

Additionally, community and faith-based organizations might have personnel in parts of the affected areas where your staff are not present. They may also have other resources that are useful during disasters, such as media contacts, Web sites, toll-free numbers and translators.

How can my agency involve these community organizations in our disaster preparedness discussions?

Convene a “get-ready” meeting before a disaster occurs. Invite grocers, community organizations, and faith-based groups. At this meeting, consider conducting a [needs assessment](#). A needs assessment will identify existing outreach services and resources in your community. It will also provide your agency with a better understanding of the number and nature of diverse groups in your community. In addition, it will help you identify geographic areas most prone to disasters, or communities, locations, and neighborhoods that may need unique assistance in the aftermath of a disaster, such as language assistance. Information identified in the needs assessment will not only help you effectively prepare to coordinate outreach efforts during a disaster, but will also reinforce cooperation for ongoing outreach.

Can my State agency include a disaster SNAP contingency plan in its State outreach plan?

Yes. A State outreach plan may include contingency plans for SNAP outreach during a disaster. Preparation is critical for an adequate disaster response. It enables a State to quickly implement activities that have been carefully planned.

When disaster SNAP benefits are operationalized, what outreach activities can be reimbursed by FNS?

To be eligible for reimbursement, partners must secure approval from the State agency in advance of implementing any disaster SNAP outreach activities.

Allowable outreach activities during a disaster may include:

- Distributing information about disaster SNAP benefits to disaster victims;
- Funding a toll-free number;
- Distributing information to media outlets;
- Translating disaster SNAP outreach materials into other languages;
- Prescreening activities that do not involve accessing the State eligibility system or existing client case files;
- Distributing and helping prospective participants fill out disaster SNAP benefit application forms at disaster sites; and/or
- Greeting prospective participants at disaster SNAP benefit application entrances and directing them to appropriate areas.

How can I learn more about disaster SNAP benefits?

For complete information on conducting SNAP outreach during times of disaster, please see the Disaster SNAP Guidance on the FNS Web site:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/disasters/disaster.htm>

Web-Based Resources

<i>Resource</i>	<i>Website</i>
FNS Disaster Assistance Home Page	http://www.fns.usda.gov/disasters/disaster.htm
SNAP Disaster Handbook	http://www.fns.usda.gov/disasters/disaster.htm
Outreach State Plan Guidance	http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/default.htm
FNS press releases	http://www.fns.usda.gov/cga/PressReleases/PressReleases.htm
FRAC Disaster Handbook	http://www.frac.org/pdf/dfsp05.pdf

Before A Disaster Strikes

Step 1 Develop A Plan

Convene or participate in a “get-ready” meeting with community and faith-based partners.

- Explain how disaster SNAP benefits can provide food assistance to those adversely affected by disasters, whether man-made or due to natural causes.
- Explain how disaster victims already enrolled in the regular SNAP program may be assisted with replacement benefits.
- Discuss strengths and needs of each partner in terms of disaster response.
- Discuss what community partner staff can and cannot do during a disaster.
- Plan and document how you will work together to prepare for potential future disasters. Be very specific about the best ways to get the word out, how that can be done in an emergency, and who will do it.
- Develop a contact list of participating members with multiple ways of reaching each party in the event of a disaster. Identify who will be responsible for periodically updating this information and on what schedule.
- Discuss what resources will be distributed



10 Steps To Plan For Disaster SNAP Outreach

1. Develop A Plan
2. Develop Needs Assessment
3. Add To The State Plan
4. Describe Outreach Activities
5. Plan For Media Activities
6. Maintain Good Relationships
7. Implement Activities
8. Develop New Partnerships
9. Connect Disaster Victims
10. Thank Staff And Partners

Step 2 Conduct a Needs Assessment

- If your community has not conducted a needs assessment, take steps to complete one. Consider if volunteers or staff will complete the needs assessment.
- If your community has previously conducted a needs assessment, reevaluate the findings and update corresponding next steps.
- Identify existing outreach services and resources in your community.
- Identify partners with special expertise, such as ethnic media contacts or translators.
- Identify vulnerable populations in your community, such as those in certain geographic areas or those with particular language needs, who may be most affected by potential disasters or who will need extra support accessing help following the disaster.

Step 3 Add To The State Plan

- Develop a State outreach plan and add a contingency plan for outreach activities to respond to a disaster.
- If you already have a State Outreach Plan, add a contingency section for SNAP outreach during disasters.

- Include a list of allowable activities and identify which agency will handle each activity. Advanced planning improves your disaster response. Knowing you have the tools and resources in place will reduce stress and improve your ability to respond to a disaster, when or if it occurs.
- Include drafts or template materials that your State might use as part of your media response.
- Maintain a hard copy of the contingency plan in a secure offsite location. If there is a disaster, you might not have access to a computer or your office.

Step 4 Describe Outreach Activities

- Describe your disaster outreach activities in your State Disaster SNAP Plan. If your State does not have an outreach plan, provide sufficient details on outreach activities and contacts. If your State agency has an outreach plan, make references to that plan.
- Develop templates of outreach materials, such as fliers, posters, and a Web page, so that they can be finalized quickly when needed. Consider the alternatives for printing and distributing in an emergency situation.
- Maintain a hard copy of the plan in a secure offsite location. If there is a disaster, you might not have access to a computer or your office.
- Identify a community liaison whose sole responsibility during a disaster is to coordinate and share information between the State agency and community partners.

Step 5 Plan For Media Activities

- Develop and articulate State policy on who initiates or handles media inquiries in your State Disaster SNAP Plan and State Outreach Plan.
- Identify State spokespeople in the plans. There may be more than one contact.
- Develop a list of media outlets (television, radio, online or print) for disaster SNAP outreach. These outlets can inform your audience of details about disaster SNAP benefits when it is implemented.
- Include phone numbers, fax numbers and addresses so that you have multiple ways to reach the media.

Step 6 Maintain Relationships

- Keep in touch with your community and faith-based partners. Check with them periodically to confirm their roles and responsibilities and to update your contact lists.
- If your State contracts outreach activities to organizations, contractual oversight will require more frequent contacts.
- Consider holding a practice drill, role-playing game or table-top exercise to practice what you will do in the event of a real disaster.

When A Disaster Strikes

Step 7 Implement Activities

- Make contact with outreach partners and implement your contingency plan.
- Provide accurate and consistent messages to your partners via the community liaison, especially as you make changes to the application process, application sites, or other aspects of the program that affect applicant eligibility and access.
- Remind State employees in disaster areas of media procedures. This is important because you may have employees from other States with different media policies.

Step 8 Develop New Partnerships

- Initiate partnerships with new organizations to meet unanticipated needs.
- Expand outreach activities, if needed. Don't feel limited. You may conduct necessary activities even though they are not referenced in your State Outreach Plan.

When A Disaster Is Over

Step 9 Connect Disaster Victims

- Disaster SNAP benefits recipients who wish to apply for the regular SNAP will need to follow the normal SNAP application process. Some households may have questions about SNAP requirements or may need assistance in filling out application forms or securing verification documents. Others may need other types of assistance such as clothing or household goods. Your partners can play an important role to help you provide the services your client might need during this stressful time.
- Let the media and other opinion leaders know how disaster SNAP benefits and regular SNAP responded to the needs of families and the broader community.

Step 10 Thank Staff And Partners

- Recognize employees and partners for a job well done.
- Make changes to your outreach and disaster plans based on what worked and what didn't work.
- Visit the FNS Web site and prepare promising practices for disaster outreach: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/promising/Default.htm>

10 Ideas For Disaster SNAP Outreach

1. **Inform the media.** Use the media to spread messages about the availability of disaster SNAP benefits. Be sure the identified spokesperson has the timely and correct information and an updated media list. Be sure to follow your State's procedures.
2. **Coordinate with other responders.** Identify the liaison to other first (disaster) responders in the community. Be sure that they have the correct information about disaster SNAP benefits and can share it with disaster victims they serve.
3. **Engage grocery store partners.** Provide information to grocers to post, distribute in grocery bags or announce in stores.
4. **Enlist faith- and community-based partners.** Enlist the help of your partners to distribute information (who can apply, when, where) about disaster SNAP benefits or to perform other duties as described in your State Disaster or State Outreach Plan(s).
5. **Use community volunteers.** Engage volunteers to perform activities such as answering the State/local toll-free number, distributing informational materials at grocery stores and monitoring SNAP lines to make sure potential applicants are in the correct line at disaster sites.
6. **Enlist community translators.** Work with community translators to translate news releases for ethnic media and informational materials, and to serve as interpreters during SNAP interviews.
7. **Provide a toll-free number.** Set up cellular phones to use as disaster SNAP benefit informational numbers if land lines are not working.
8. **Use the remote telephone feature.** Use the remote message feature of your telephone system, if available, to announce disaster SNAP benefit information. If this is not available, contact FNS to ask about using the national toll-free number remote messaging feature and/or contact your State SNAP EBT provider to ask if a message can be added to the customer service phone line.
9. **Post disaster SNAP information on your Web site.** Provide basic information, such as who may qualify, where and when to apply, and types of verification documents, if needed.
10. **Develop new outreach partnerships.** Develop new outreach partnerships to provide disaster SNAP benefit information to disaster victims, based on what is occurring in your community.

Sample Press Release

For Immediate Release

Contact:

[DATE]

[NAME OF APPROPRIATE CONTACT]

[AREA CODE AND PHONE NUMBER]

[CELL PHONE]

Disaster Victims Now Eligible for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

[CITY, STATE] - Many victims of [DISASTER] are now eligible for disaster SNAP benefits.

[QUOTE ABOUT SIGNIFICANCE OF NUTRITION ASSISTANCE FOLLOWING A DISASTER,] said
[STATE OFFICIAL.]

The United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service has approved disaster SNAP benefits to allow victims of [DISASTER] in [eligible geographic area] to receive nutrition assistance. Eligible households will receive an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card to use to purchase food at retail locations. Eligibility criteria for disaster SNAP benefits are different than for the regular Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Residents who have experienced *(describe unique disaster elements that may make residents eligible for the disaster SNAP benefits)* may be eligible. Other eligibility factors include [LIST ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA.]

Applications for disaster SNAP benefits will be accepted until [date]. Residents of [ELIGIBLE GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS] can apply for disaster SNAP benefits at the following locations and times:

Location: [ADDRESS]

Hours of Operation: [HOURS]

Those seeking to apply for disaster benefits from SNAP are encouraged to bring verification of identity and residency, if possible, with them when they apply. If the applicant's documents have been lost in the disaster, disaster SNAP staff can provide guidance on how applicants can prove their identity. [List other documents that should be available at application or other information about needed verifications.]

More information about disaster SNAP benefits is available on [WEB SITE ADDRESS AND TOLL-FREE NUMBER].

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Sample Press Release

For Immediate Release

Contact:

[DATE]

[NAME OF APPROPRIATE CONTACT]

[AREA CODE AND PHONE NUMBER]

[CELL PHONE]

Deadline To Apply for Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Benefits

Is [ADD WHEN]

[CITY, STATE] – Victims of [DISASTER] are reminded that they have until [DEADLINE] to apply for disaster nutrition assistance from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). SNAP's disaster benefits enable those who have experienced loss, such as [list criteria], as a result of the [DISASTER] to receive SNAP benefits on an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card to purchase food at retail stores.

[QUOTE ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF APPLYING BEFORE TIME RUNS OUT.] said, [STATE OFFICIAL].
[QUOTE ABOUT HOW MANY BENEFITS HAVE BEEN ISSUED TO DATE.]

Residents of [GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION] may be eligible for disaster nutrition assistance from the Food and Nutrition Service. Provisions of disaster SNAP benefits are different from the regular SNAP, so those affected by [DISASTER] in the designated locations are encouraged to apply to find out if they may be eligible for benefits under this program.

Applications will be accepted at the following locations until [DEADLINE.]

Location: [ADDRESS]

Hours of Operation: [HOURS]

Those seeking to apply for disaster SNAP benefits are encouraged to bring verification of identity and residency, if possible, with them when they apply. If the applicant's documents have been lost in the disaster, disaster SNAP staff can provide guidance on how applicants can prove their identity.
[LIST OTHER DOCUMENTS THAT SHOULD BE AVAILABLE AT APPLICATION OR OTHER INFORMATION ABOUT NEEDED VERIFICATIONS.]

More information about the disaster SNAP benefits is available on [WEB SITE ADDRESS AND TOLL-FREE NUMBER.]

###

Tips & Tools: Resources for Outreach



Tips & Tools

Creating Local Outreach Materials

Need help developing outreach materials for your audience? Visit this chapter to get helpful tips and access templates for fliers and other turn-key handouts.

Evaluating Your Local Outreach Project

Measuring the success of your outreach is important for partnership development, reporting and securing new funding. This section provides ideas for evaluating a variety of outreach projects.

Spanish-language Glossary

Having trouble figuring out how to translate a government acronym? Or if there are multiple translations for the same word? This English to Spanish language glossary provides a thorough list of SNAP related words.

Resources

Learn About SNAP resources, including the new Community Hunger Champions DVD. Also includes lists of regional FNS contacts, in case you need additional technical assistance.

Creating Local Outreach Materials

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Web site contains materials that are generic, free, and available for order or download at <http://snap.ntis.gov/>. They may be customized with a sticker or a rubber stamp to add your organization's name and phone number or other contact information. In the event that these materials do not meet your need, there is an abundance of existing materials available at the local and State level that complement FNS informational materials. A [community needs assessment](#) can help you learn what local materials other organizations are using. However, there will still be times when you must create your own. This guide is designed to help you.

Before you begin...

Please keep in mind that not all State agencies use the Federal name, SNAP. Some States have their own name and you will need to make sure your materials reflect the State name.

Before embarking on an outreach effort in your community, it's important to develop partnerships with local SNAP offices for a number of reasons, including:

- SNAP offices may be willing to provide State informational materials, including application forms. These may contain State-specific information about Program requirements.
- SNAP offices that know about local community outreach efforts can plan to handle the increase in telephone calls or applications.

Step 1 Make a plan.

Describe:

- Who is your target audience? Whom exactly are you trying to reach?
- Why is the material needed? Do other partners have existing materials that can be used?
- What information do you want to convey to your audience? Do you have a call-to-action? What is the best format to convey information (e.g., brochure, flier, insert, poster, or newsletter) and do you need multiple sizes (e.g., quarter, half, or full page)?
- What languages will be needed? Who will translate? Do you need to consider transcreating? (Transcreating goes beyond directly translating and considers tone, images, and cultural sensitivities.)
- Will you need images? Can you use photos from the FNS gallery. Do you have your own photographs or will you need to purchase stock photography? Will you develop original photography?
- When are the materials needed? Create a timeline and account for holidays. Determine clearance process. If materials are complex, multiple rounds of review should be considered in your timeline.
- Who will develop the written content? Does it require approvals? If so, by whom?



Tips & Tools

A **call-to-action** is what you want your audience to do with your information, such as call a certain toll-free number, go to a Web site, or attend an event.

- Who will design the materials? Do you have the software you need to do the design? Will you need to purchase a software program?
- Who will proofread and edit the materials?
- Will the resource be in black and white or multicolored? (Multi colored documents tend to cost more money.)
- How will they be duplicated or produced (desktop printer, copy shop or in-house copier, or commercial printer)?
- Where, how, and by whom will they be distributed?
- How will you incorporate organizational or program branding? Do you need to account for co-branding?

Step 2 Create a budget.

- List all of your items that require funding (e.g., writing and/or translation fees, photography, software, design, printing, postage, distribution fees, labels, etc.)
- If you have the funds to implement your plan, you are ready to go! If not, you will want to go back through your plan and see where you can cut costs. *NOTE: If you need to create original photography, you may need to budget talent costs.*

Step 3 Implement your plan.

Once you have developed your plan and timeline and set aside a budget, it's time to put your plan into action. Developing a material or resource can take some time and energy. If you are pulled in many directions, you may want to assign the task or get someone to help you.

How To Develop Written Materials

- Write for a low-literate audience. Keep text short, simple, and to the point. Stay focused on what's important to convey in the piece and remember to include your call-to-action.
- Make sure to place the contact name, phone number, toll-free number, and Web site in a prominent spot.
- If quoting someone, be sure to include name of the person, his or her title, and organization.
- Edit and proofread materials. Make sure to get someone else to proofread the draft.
- Test the materials with members of your audience, if possible – both in the draft and design stages. You can do this by giving them a copy of your material to read and asking them if it is easy to understand; or by reading your material to two to three people. Encourage your audience to feel comfortable making suggestions.
- Obtain approvals, if needed.

How To Design Materials

- What software, if any, will be used?
- Browse through similar materials to get ideas. Look at the materials on the FNS Web site for ideas.
- Design in the best format for your audience (size, length, orientation, kind of binding, if any).
- Will you include pictures, graphics, or recipes? These elements add life to your materials and capture the attention of your target audience, making them more likely to take the piece and read it.
- Consider fonts and sizes. For materials geared to seniors, use a larger size such as 12-point. This font size is also suggested for low-literate audiences. Use fonts that are easy to read such as Arial, Calibri, or Times New Roman.
- Don't be afraid to use a lot of white space in your design—this is especially important for seniors. Don't develop materials that are too busy—your message will get lost.
- Use color. Your budget will determine how much color you can use.
- Create your layout. Sketch out ideas and play around with pictures, fonts, font sizes, color, shading, contrast, space, etc. If using color fonts, borders, pictures, etc., consider what color paper will be used.
- Is your message clear? How about your call-to-action and your brand?
- Promote those partnerships! More than one art image (logo) can be used.
- Check for accuracy. Proofread carefully for typos and grammatical or syntax errors, and make final edits before getting approvals.
- Obtain approvals, if needed.



Download

Check out the free photos at SNAP-Ed Photo Gallery http://grande.nal.usda.gov/foodstamp_album.php.

Also feel free to use the recipe finder at <http://recipefinder.nal.usda.gov/>.

How To Handle Duplication or Printing

- Run test copies to see if the layout needs to be revised.
- If submitting to a printing company, make sure directions are clear: communicate number of copies needed, dimensions, paper weight, paper color, and colors of ink. Specify packaging; for example, should materials be wrapped in specific quantities? Or perhaps it would be helpful to have single sheets bound as tear-offs in pads.
- Ask for proofs and approve them before the job is run. You may want to go to a press inspection to approve the product as it comes off the press.

Templates

The following Microsoft Word fill-in-the-blank templates are provided to help you develop your materials. You may also want to check out templates in desktop publishing software for newsletters, fliers, brochures, or other types of materials. Knowing your budget before you start is important as it can affect the design of your product.

These templates assume your State is using the new Federal name, SNAP. If your State is not using the new name, you should use your State name. The templates also allow you to pick and choose what information you might want to include in your materials.

If you plan to include specific eligibility information and you are crafting the language, you should share draft materials with your local SNAP office for comment. It is important to correctly present State rules to your audience. Also, your local office may have materials you can use to develop your text or give to your customers. Check this before you get started.

If your organization has a logo, insignia, or other unique identifier, you may want to use it with your materials when appropriate. If you are partnering with several organizations that have logos, you may also want to include those graphics in your document.

General SNAP Flier

Farmer's Market Features Local Chefs Demonstrating Healthy Foods, Free Tastings

What: [Insert name of event]

When: [Insert date and time of event]

Hosts: [List event sponsors]

Highlights: [Insert your message/what you want people to know]

Example: Come see cooking demonstrations with healthy, low-cost foods and learn how SNAP might help with your food budget. SNAP is the new name for the Federal Food Stamp Program—the Program that helps people with low incomes buy all sorts of foods such as fruits, vegetables, and low-fat milk products.

Find out if you might be eligible and learn how to apply. In these tough times, you or someone you know might benefit from SNAP.

Location: [Insert address]

Directions: [Optional]

For more information call [Insert toll-free number] **or visit our Web site at** [Insert local Web address]

Flier for Newly Unemployed

Location of SNAP Office and Steps To Apply

What is SNAP?

SNAP is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. It's the new name for the Federal Food Stamp Program. This program helps people who have lost their jobs eat right when money is tight.

How can I find out if I am eligible for benefits?

Go to [Insert local/State pre-screener Web site or <http://www.snap-step1.usda.gov/fns/>] or visit us at [Insert local event with date, time, and location, if applicable].

How can I get an application form?

Pick up an application form at [insert location of outreach provider or event] or at a local SNAP office. If your State has an online application form, you may use it or you can have a form mailed to you.

Can I get help filling out the application form?

If you need help completing the form, you can call [insert contact information for your organization, other outreach provider, or local SNAP office].

What papers should I bring to the interview with the SNAP worker?

The SNAP worker will need papers from you to verify your name, address, household income, and expenses. These might include your rent receipt, utility bill, child or elder care receipts, or pay stubs. The SNAP worker will calculate your household income and will subtract allowable expenses such as rent, utilities, child or elder care, or medical bills (if you are elderly or disabled) to determine how much food help you might be eligible to receive. Having the right documentation with you can speed up the process.

Questions?

[Insert name of contact, phone number, Web site, or event information. You may also want to provide local office information or distribute flier showing location(s) of local SNAP offices].

Location of SNAP office:

[Insert address, hours of operation, phone number, Web site, directions (optional)].

NOTE: Some local offices have more than one location. Your form should list only local offices that are part of your project. If your project will involve all local offices, please list the office locations, who should apply at what office (offices may be divided by ZIP code), and business hours. If possible, include local contact information for each office.

If there are multiple offices, you may want to develop a flier or insert showing above information.

Flier for Low-Income, Low-Literate Persons, p. 1

Need Money To Help Buy Food? Check Out SNAP.

What is SNAP?

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, known as SNAP [Insert name of your State Program, if SNAP name is not used], is the new name for the Federal Food Stamp Program. SNAP helps people with little or no income buy all sorts of foods including fruits and vegetables.

Can I get SNAP benefits?

- To receive benefits, your income and resources have to be under certain limits.
- People with lower incomes receive more benefits.
- When determining your income, the local SNAP office worker subtracts allowable expenses such as rent, utilities, child or elder care, or medical bills (if you are elderly or disabled) to find out how much food help you will get.
- Resources include the amount of money you have in bank accounts.
- [Insert State-specific information. Your State may be using broad-based categorical eligibility. You may wish to tailor communication for households receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)]

How can I tell if I might be eligible?

Go to [Insert local/State pre-screener Web site or <http://www.snap-step1.usda.gov/fns/>] or visit us at [Insert local event with date, time, and location, if applicable].

[Suggested language for prescreening tool: Answer the questions as thoroughly as possible. You will find out if you might be eligible and how much you could receive. The prescreening tool is not an application for SNAP benefits. To know for sure if you are eligible, you must fill out an application form and turn it in to your local office.]

Flier for Low-Income, Low-Literate Persons, p. 2

How do I apply for benefits?

- Get an application form from [insert information on where they can get form].
- Fill out the application form as best as you can.

[Optional: You may wish to offer assistance here and provide information on your organization.]

[Optional: You might remind the applicant to be sure to put his/her name and address on the application and sign it, and advise him or her to fill out at least the first page and leave it at the local office—doing this starts the application process.]

- Return the application to the local office by mailing, faxing, or bringing it in, or applying online (in some States).
- Arrange for an interview with a SNAP worker.
[Optional: Include information such as use of authorized representatives or telephone interviews.]
- Bring papers to the interview such as pay stubs, rent or mortgage payments, utility bills, child or elder care bills, and child support court orders. At the interview, the SNAP worker may ask you for other papers.

If I am approved, what can I expect?

Once the SNAP worker has all of your information, you will be told if you are approved or denied.

If approved, you will be told how much you will receive and you will get an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card to use when buying groceries at the store.

Questions?

[Insert name of contact, phone number, Web site, or event information. You may also want to provide local office information or distribute flier showing location(s) of local SNAP offices].

How do I find my local SNAP office?

Location of SNAP office:

[Insert address, hours of operation, phone number, Web site, directions (optional)]

NOTE: Some local offices have more than one location. Your form should list only local offices that are part of your project. If your project will involve all local offices, please list the office locations, who should apply at what office (offices may be divided by ZIP code), and business hours. If possible, include local contact information for each office.

If there are multiple offices, you may want to develop a flier or insert showing above information.

General SNAP Inserts

Inserts can be used by any entity in mailings, advertisements, and bulletins such as:

- utility or phone bills;
- church or other bulletins;
- payroll checks or stubs;
- advertising fliers, or
- backpacks of children.

Do you need help paying for groceries? SNAP might be able to help.

(Optional) The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, known as SNAP (State name if not called SNAP), helps people with low income buy all sorts of foods, including fruits and vegetables.

For more information about SNAP [enter local or State toll-free number or other contact information and local Web site address].

Do you or does someone you know need help paying for groceries? SNAP might be the answer.

(Optional) The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, known as SNAP (State name if not called SNAP), helps people with low income buy all sorts of foods, including fruits and vegetables.

If you or someone you know has low income or has recently lost his or her job, call for information (enter local or State toll-free number or other information and local Web site address).

A Guide to Evaluating Your Local Outreach Project

Section I. Overview of Project Evaluation

Evaluation means measuring progress or success. Finding out whether your outreach efforts are on target and achieving results is important for many reasons, which we discuss in this chapter. We will also suggest possible methods and tools.

Specifically, the chapter features practical, step-by-step tools to evaluate:

- Media outreach
- Paid advertising and Public Service Announcements (PSAs)
- Partnership development
- Events
- Public awareness

You are advised to look to the research and/or evaluation division within your organization or a credible third party consultant or organization for assistance with program evaluation.

This chapter is *not intended* to address evaluating the outcomes of work performed at local SNAP offices by State eligibility workers such as customer service levels, application processing time, application of policy, accuracy of approvals, or denials of applications.

What is SNAP outreach?

SNAP outreach means efforts to educate potential applicants about the nutrition benefits of the program, and to help them make an informed decision whether to apply. If a person decides to apply for benefits, outreach providers can provide further help, such as prescreening, gathering verification documents, and helping people fill out the application form.

What are some evaluation tools?

Depending on your budget, organization size, and time you wish to devote to evaluation, a variety of evaluation tools are available to you. They range from informal and free, such as creating a media coverage index and file, to more expensive and more formal tools, such as hiring a consultant or research company. Outreach evaluation doesn't have to be complicated, time consuming, or expensive. Choose the evaluation tools that best suit your program's needs, budget, and evaluation priorities.

How do I select and prioritize outreach evaluation tools?

Before selecting evaluation tools, consider your outreach project's goal, objectives, and priorities. It's important to evaluate against these so that you can demonstrate the success of your program. Focus first on evaluating the most important and robust components of your outreach project. Are your partnerships your most important priority? Then evaluate those first. Smaller, lower priority outreach activities can be evaluated next.

Other factors in choosing evaluation tools are budget, staff, and time available. The simpler the evaluation method, the less time and staff it takes. In fact, no more than one person is required to manage most evaluation tools outlined in this section.

Evaluations are based on either qualitative or quantitative measures or both. With regard to SNAP, it would be ideal to measure how many people apply and are approved or denied for benefits because of your outreach efforts. However, there are two significant reasons why looking at actual participation rates in relation to communication outreach might not be practical:

1. Your communication efforts alone may not result in successful SNAP applications – there are variables to consider. If the customer receives poor service, faces barriers such as lack of transportation to the local SNAP office or literacy issues, or simply finds he or she is not eligible once the application is submitted, that is not a reflection of your communication outreach. It's important to be clear about what you are evaluating.
2. The best way to assess participation increases will be to look at the entire program, not just your communications outreach. Consider that communications outreach can raise audience awareness about SNAP, can drive potential customers to seek more information, and can give guidance on how to apply for benefits.

Government and nongovernment organizations and communities have limited resources and many competing needs. More cost-efficient evaluation alternatives will help manage budgets while still providing information to assist in your decisionmaking.

For many outreach efforts, “softer” measures will be sufficient – such as how many people your effort reached as well as the outputs of your efforts (what happened). When put into practice, any of the methods we discuss will help you identify strategies and best practices to improve communication outreach.

The most successful communication plans are those that take evaluation into account from the beginning.

How do I incorporate evaluation into outreach planning?

Your plan should consider the scope of evaluation and how elaborate and extensive you would like it to be. If you plan to hire a consultant or research firm to design an evaluation program, it is important to involve them during the planning phase.

Your communication plan goals (broad plans) and objectives (specific and measurable outcomes) should reflect elements you want to measure.

For instance:

Goals:

- Raise awareness about the name change from the Food Stamp Program to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, SNAP
- Improve public perception of SNAP



Tools & Tips

Additional Benefits of Evaluation

- Creates standards for success or a baseline to measure against over a period of time
- Helps your program grow and become more successful as lessons learned can be utilized to help strengthen it in the future
- Identifies duplication of efforts and strategies that work and don't work with your target audience
- Lends credibility to your organization, especially as you work to build partnerships
- Gives you a competitive edge as your organization competes for Federal grants or other funding

Objectives:

- Increase the number of phone calls to a toll-free number
- Increase the requests for SNAP information
- Increase the number of seniors (or another audience segment) who apply
- Improve the preparedness of potential applicants (for instance, help them gather the correct documentation to get them through the application process)

If your organization has information on a Web site, there are several other objectives you can set:

- Increase the number of unique visitors to a particular page(s) on the Web site
- Increase the number of application downloads (if the application is available online)
- Increase time on site

These can act as a starting point or benchmark to evaluate your outreach and measure success. For example, if your top communication goal is to improve public perception of SNAP, then you may define that further by establishing a more specific, measurable, timely, and quantifiable objective such as “Secure at least five positive media placements in broadcast or print outlets within the next 6 months.”

Then, as you develop the rest of your plan, be sure your communication strategy and tactics all work toward meeting these goals.

Why should I evaluate my outreach to media?

Media (both earned and paid) evaluation should be a part of your outreach plan. Most importantly, it will help you evaluate the success of your communications and showcase your results. This is important, if you:

- Are working to raise awareness about SNAP and educate your audience(s) about its benefits,
- Are collaborating with partners, or
- Want to position your organization for funding opportunities.

Section II: Evaluating Paid Advertising and Public Service Announcements (PSAs)***How can paid advertising and PSAs be evaluated?***

Advertising and PSA evaluation is about “awareness” of the ads. You will be measuring how well your ad’s key messages have reached your target audience.

**Tools & Tips**

Make sure to train partners or others who will be capturing the evaluation information. It’s important that each person understand what information must be recorded, dates to submit, and who will receive it.

**Media Goals and Objectives****Inputs**

- Was there an assessment of the best media outlet for the message?
- Were selected outlets accessible to target audiences (language used, literacy level of the target population)?
- For TV and radio, did messages air during peak hours?

Quantity

- Number of members of the target audience you are seeking to reach
- Number of preferred outlets available in your local market
- Number of placements you are aiming to make within a specific timeframe
- Number of reporters who did not write but expressed future interest
- Number of calls to toll-free line in week following appearance of story

Quality

- Number of stories that incorporate your key messages; have a positive tone, publication placement (front page vs. middle of the paper), and positive images (photos, graphs, and charts) versus number of stories that are neutral or negative in tone; messages are absent; and so on. This is also called a content analysis.
- When graphics were included, did illustrations clearly communicate a key point and were they culturally relevant?

What are some typical evaluation tools used for paid advertising and PSAs?

There are several evaluation tools used to assess the effectiveness of advertising and PSA campaigns:

- **Confirm that the spots ran.** For paid advertising and donated (bonus) placements, determine whether the advertising ran. Find out what the impressions are – the number of times your ad was heard/viewed over the course of the campaign – and the estimated dollar values for all spots. The number of times your ad was heard/viewed and the dollar values are key in showcasing the success of your advertising efforts.

For PSAs, follow up with the stations to find out how often and when the spots ran. Also find out the estimated dollar value and audience impressions or number of viewers per PSA. Go to the PSA chapter for more information. Generally, airings during prime time are considered successful, as impressions and dollar value are higher. If you land a prime time spot, it's a good indication that your campaign resonated well. It's also more likely that your target audience heard/saw the spot.
- **Examine your ad's call to action.** If your call to action is to get people to call a hotline, evaluate whether the number of calls increased during your advertising period. Compare the number of phone calls during advertising times to the number of calls made during the same period in a previous year when no advertising ran. Depending on the ratio between your baseline (nonadvertising) numbers and the change during and following advertising, you can get a good indication of whether your message resonated with your audience with enough frequency and effectiveness. If the change was not significant, you may want to revisit the actual message or increase its repetition.
- **Conduct focus group sessions.** Discuss awareness of ads with focus group participants. More on focus groups later in this chapter.

How do I evaluate the effectiveness of paid advertising?

The chart below summarizes things you should do to evaluate the effectiveness of paid advertising, by advertising medium and call to action (e.g., calls to a toll-free number and visits to a Web site).

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>
Radio and Television	Request reports and invoices on how often and when the advertisements were played, and carefully review them to ensure the advertisements were placed according to the planned schedule.
Print	Request “tear sheets” or copies of the ad that ran in the publication. Obtain this information from every publication in which print ads were placed.
Online Banner Ads	Work with the designer of both banner ads and the Web site so that click-through rates and impressions—or the number of times your ad was seen over the course of the campaign—are monitored.
Outdoor Billboards and Transit Ads	Request a proof of performance after the campaign is over, which includes pictures and details about the campaign.
Toll-Free Number	Compare the number of phone calls during advertising flights to the number of calls made during the same period in a previous year when no advertising ran. By doing so, you can determine how much more advertising has reached the target audience during the advertising period.
Web Site Visitors	Compare the number of hits during advertising months to the number of hits during the same period in a previous year when there was no advertising.

What should I do if my organization does not get the number of spots paid for or if the print outlet doesn't run the advertisement?

While monitoring, if you learn that a radio or television station did not deliver the negotiated number of spots, or if a print outlet did not run an advertisement on a specific date, contact the outlet and ask it to “make good” on the original advertisement by running another in its place for no additional cost.

How do I measure the success of PSAs?

Like paid advertising, the success of PSAs depends on whether your spot aired, frequency, and time of day it aired. The more times it aired during a good time slot (morning/evening drive time is the best), the greater the awareness you are creating.

If you have a toll-free number, track the success of your effort by identifying any increase in the number of calls during the period when the PSAs ran.

Another measure of success is to find out the dollar value associated with the free PSA. If the PSA had been a paid ad, what would you have paid for it to air at the times and frequency that your free PSA did? If you are working with limited funds, a side-by-side comparison of the cost savings between a paid ad and a PSA could be considered a measurement of success.

Section III: Media Evaluation

What is media outreach evaluation?

Media outreach evaluation assesses the effectiveness and success of media relations. Reviewing and analyzing your media outreach and subsequent coverage allows you to find out what did and didn't work. It also gives you an opportunity to share your success. The end result does not need to be a lengthy report. It can be bulleted information or charts that help you track your efforts.

The results of media outreach efforts – how much (quantity) and what kind (quality) – are useful indicators that outreach efforts are working. If you can get your story into several local news outlets, you will reach a larger audience. But quality is just as important if not more important than quantity. Quality media coverage fully communicates your key points or messages and gives people sufficient information to make an informed decision about your program.

For example, if local negative media coverage is linking SNAP to increases in obesity rates, then your organization can intervene with a media pitch focused on the nutritional benefits of SNAP. Use the opportunity to clear up misperceptions about SNAP, share valuable resources such as the RecipeFinder, and discuss how SNAP can help people purchase healthier foods such as fruits and vegetables.

Steps to Evaluating Your Media Outreach

1. **Set objectives before starting media outreach.** You will use those objectives to measure your success.
2. **Establish a starting point (baseline).** For example, before starting your campaign, record how many calls you are getting about SNAP benefits, or how much media coverage is already underway. If you do this, you can quantify future improvements and increases.
3. **Begin your analysis as soon as possible.** This should start after your media push or event.
4. **Use numbers to paint your success story.** For example, “following the launch of our media outreach, there was a 50-percent increase in media coverage compared to last year,” or, “after our appearance on the local radio show, calls about SNAP increased by 20 percent.”



Tips & Tools

Assessing Media Outreach

Two primary ways to assess media outreach are through the quantity and quality of earned media coverage. Earned media, or free media coverage, refers to publicity gained through promotional efforts or editorial influences other than paid advertising. Earned media might come in the form of a news article, placement of an op-ed or letter to the editor, radio reader, or broadcast news segment.

5. **Use personal stories and experiences to demonstrate your success.** For example, “many clients stated that until they saw the TV story they thought they would not qualify for SNAP benefits.” In addition, use quotes from customers that support your success: “I have a job and was surprised to learn that I qualified for SNAP benefits.”
6. **Include information on the reach of a media outlet.** For example, “The article ran in the Anytown News, which has a circulation of 80,000.”
7. **Look at media coverage to determine whether you communicated your key points.** If you wanted to convey that seniors can be interviewed for benefits over the telephone, did it appear from the media coverage that people who read or heard your story understood the points?
8. **Make copies of the newspaper articles that include your contributions.** Keep a file of media coverage that you can easily access.
9. **Share articles with partners.** Articles can be kept in a folder and presented at meetings.

How can I get circulation or audience numbers?

If you secured a media placement, check the outlet’s Web site to see if it contains circulation or audience numbers. Oftentimes, that information is listed on the Web site’s “About” or “Advertising” section. In the Advertising section, you may need to look at their sales brochure or media kit. If you can’t locate the information, call the advertising department.



Tips & Tools

For online articles or blogs, audience or circulation figures are measured by Unique Monthly Visitors to the Web site. Oftentimes, this information is available on the site (explore the bottom navigation) but, if not, drop a note to the author. The author’s byline is typically a hyperlink to his or her email.

What if I’m not reaching my media outreach objectives?

If your media outreach efforts are not yielding the results you hoped for, reexamine the news angles, pitch letters, and media lists you’re using and refine them. Try other news angles and add as much newsworthiness as possible. Edit your pitch letter to make it more compelling or shorten it if it’s too detailed. Media often prefer concise pitch letters via email. If your media lists are a few months old, the contacts might be outdated. Update your contacts by checking to see who is covering health and nutrition issues. Confirm how pitches should be submitted.

How do I monitor media coverage?

There are multiple ways to monitor for media coverage, such as:

- Check the outlet’s Web site on a regular basis. Most searches are free for any time up to a week or month.
- Buy the newspaper if you know the day the story will run.
- Use an online search engine, particularly a news-oriented one, like Google News.
- Set up a Google News Alert to monitor coverage for keywords like SNAP or your State’s program name. Google News Alerts will regularly send you coverage for the keywords you monitor.
- If you know a TV segment will air at a certain time, record the segment.

- For radio, request the date and time the segment will run and see if the outlet would be willing to send a recording. After the fact, it is very difficult to track down a radio segment.

If you regularly secure media coverage and have a budget to spend on monitoring, there are numerous professional services that will monitor media.

What are some professional media monitoring services?

If you decide to contract out your media tracking, there are a range of media monitoring services that will locate your media coverage according to specific keyword(s) you provide. The service will send you the article or segment.

- **Google News Alerts:** Select a keyword or topic of interest to you and Google will email you links to news stories on that topic. You can sign up to receive free daily, weekly, or as-it-happens email alerts.
- **Burrelles Luce:** This is a full-service provider of media monitoring for print, online, and broadcast outlets. <http://www.burrellesluce.com> or 1-866-533-1442
- **NewzGroup:** Provides comprehensive statewide press clipping services of all daily and weekly newspapers in Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, South Carolina, Texas, West Virginia, and Wyoming. <http://www.newzgroup.com> or 1-800-474-1111
- **Lexis-Nexis:** This is probably the most comprehensive online database of full-text news and magazine articles, but it is also among the most expensive of the available services. <http://www.lexisnexis.com>
- **U.S. Newspaper List:** If you're interested in monitoring media coverage on your own, you can search a comprehensive list of State and local media outlets at U.S. Newspaper List. Once on the site, click on your State and then city for shortcuts to your community papers and television stations. <http://www.usnpl.com>
- **Video Monitoring Service (VMS):** Provides comprehensive media monitoring services for TV, radio, blogs and social media, and online news.

What is a clips index and how do I create one?

A clips index is a listing of all your media coverage. It contains information about the outlet, reporter's name, article title, publication date, and media outlet circulation. Keeping a running list of media coverage will help you showcase your media results and reach. It's also helpful in tracking reporters who cover your program.

A clips index is created after all your media coverage has been collected. Add to the clips index on an ongoing basis to keep track of media coverage.

SNAP Clips Index

Outlet	Date	Article Title	Reporter Name	Circulation
<i>San Antonio Express- News</i>	3/23/2010	Child obesity initiative faces two big hurdles	Veronica Flores-Paniagua	152,156
<i>The Charlotte Observer</i>	3/21/2010	Food stamp rolls growing deeper: N.C. households that depend on food stamps have increased 45% over the last 2 years.	Matt Ehlers	167,585
<i>Telluride Daily Planet</i>	3/16/2010	Food stamp use soars in 2009 in county	Kathrine Warren	4,100
<i>Appeal Democrat</i>	3/15/2010	Food assistance programs for seniors in need	Jim Miller	20,428
Total Circulation				344,269

What is a media file?

A media file or clip book is a collection of all your media coverage or clips. It usually accompanies a clips index. A media file is a great way to catalog and showcase media coverage.

Follow these tips to create a media file:

1. Locate the online or print copy of the story.
2. Cut out or print off the publication title. This is also known as a flag or logotype.
3. Include the byline (reporter's name). Sometimes the byline will simply state "Staff" or a wire service like "Associated Press."
4. Include the date of publication.
5. Layout the components on a white piece of paper so that the publication title is at the top of the page, followed by the byline, date, and actual article. You may need to cut and paste some or all items.
6. Once you have all your articles laid out, put them in reverse chronological order, so that the newest articles are on top.
7. Draft a brief, topline cover memo with your final report synthesizing the results of your media outreach; include what worked as well as what could have been done better.
8. Photocopy your memo, index, and all the laid out pages for a final report.
9. File the original clips in a safe place.
10. Share with your management and partners, if appropriate.

Section IV: Partnership Evaluation

Why should I evaluate partnerships?

Partnership activity is a useful indicator of the success of your outreach efforts. It is important to track the value of these collaborations so that you can find out what did and didn't work. You can use either process measures, outcome measures, or both, depending on the nature of your partnership.

How do I evaluate partnership success?

Partnership evaluation can be done through process measures (look at depth and quality of the relationship) and outcome measures (look at quantifiable aspects and why an activity was successful). Process measures judge how well your partnership process is working. This might cover issues including recruitment and relationships. The following are some questions you can ask yourself to evaluate a partnership's process:

Partnership Process Measures

- Has the number of partnerships increased since you began your alliance-building program?
- When you established your partnerships, did you begin with a clear list of expectations? Have partners demonstrated they clearly understand the expectations? Are those expectations being met?
- How do your partners rate the quality of the working relationship?
- Do your partners approach you with new and creative ideas for working together?
- Have your partners brought new information and expertise to the project?
- Have you seen an increase in calls to your toll-free or local number?
- If informational materials were distributed, track which were given out and how many.
- Did your partner help generate media coverage to increase the awareness of SNAP benefits? Keep track of the media clips.

Another way to evaluate partnership success is to review outcomes. This is an opportunity to evaluate whether the partnership accomplished its intended objectives. Consider these questions or factors in assessing your partnership's results:

Partnership Outcome Measures

- Work with the local SNAP office to capture information on how applicants learned about SNAP. Was it from your outreach effort? If so, does the local SNAP office feel that applicants are better prepared for their certification interview (e.g., form filled out correctly, appropriate verification documents brought in, etc.)?
- Work with the local SNAP office to assign a code (color, label, or number) for your organization. This code will be placed on all applications that your organization distributes. Ask the local office to track coded applications for you. In some instances, local offices may

be willing to provide the number of applications submitted, number approved for benefits, the number denied, and reasons for denials.

- Determine what changes in your outreach efforts have improved your ability to reach your target audience. Are the people you are reaching more receptive to one-on-one consultations? Do Spanish-speaking clients have access to an interpreter, and does that seem to improve their understanding of the application process? Has a partnership been particularly effective and, if yes, how?
- Work with your partners to put resources on their Web sites, in addition to your own Web site. Determine if there was a sizeable increase in downloads, especially if your partners promote the resources on their homepages.

Section V. Events Evaluation

What do events reveal about program success?

Events are great ways to increase awareness, interest, and excitement about SNAP in your community. A well-attended event showcases both the effectiveness of your efforts to spread the word and the community's engagement in SNAP. Events are also a good opportunity to measure your program's reach within the community.

The success of an event depends on the type of audience that attends. When planning an event, make sure to invite the appropriate target audience.

EXAMPLE

If your audience is SNAP-eligible seniors, make sure the location is accessible (i.e., ramps, few to no steps, wide hallways, etc.) and temperature controlled, and materials are easy to read. If your goal is garnering media attention, invite reporters and make it a media-friendly event.

Choose a location that is convenient for your target audience. To reach potential customers, host the event in their community. When targeting media, the location of your event should be relevant to the issue or story being presented. Take the time to scout your location before you choose it, and visit it several times before you host your event. Make sure there is nearby parking for news vans, as crews often carry heavy equipment to and from the event site.

Consider also that your event might be more successful at certain times of the day or year, for instance when school is out and children no longer get school meals, or around the holidays when people are more sensitive to hunger issues.

For more details on event planning, check out the [Media Events](#) section.

How do I evaluate event success?

As you start planning your event, clearly communicate its objectives to your program leadership and staff to avoid any misunderstandings. For example, do you want increased visibility among community officials and/or the media? A certain number of people prescreened for SNAP benefits?

When it comes to events (and most other publicity), it's not always possible to quantify results. Rather than stating the objective as, "To earn media coverage," you might say, "To earn two articles or broadcast placements in local and statewide media as a result of the event." You can see how much easier it would be to measure your performance against this objective when it's stated in a measurable way. More ideas for setting event objectives are detailed below.

The first step to evaluating an event is to gauge whether it accomplished the objectives you established. Other measures you could examine include event attendance, number of materials distributed, and media attendance and coverage. Make sure your expectations are in line with the type of event, its objectives, and factors such as the number of attendees and event location.

The type of event will determine how you evaluate. For example, if your event involves a cooking demonstration with a taste test, you might include some evaluation cards allowing your audience to register their reaction to the samples and complete a brief quiz on the nutritional value of the recipe. A review of the cards might help gauge how well the audience understood your messages on nutrition. If media are invited to the event, you could include media attendance as a measure.

For the purposes of your evaluation, it will likely not be important to break out process measures from outcome measures. If your organization would like to do a more rigorous evaluation of your program's success, it is recommended that you either hire a consultant or third party evaluation entity. However, it's important to go into planning with some evaluation criteria in mind. So, below are suggested ideas by outreach activity:

Event Attendance

- Did attendees reflect your target audience?
- Did any local officials or other important leaders attend?
- Was the turnout strong despite bad weather or did good weather encourage greater participation?
- If you were an exhibitor at a larger event, was your booth located in a high-traffic area?
- How many total exhibitors were at the event?
- Were you part of a small or large group of exhibitors?
- What kind of turnout did your booth have compared to other booths? If there was private space for people to ask questions, how did that format facilitate comfortable conversation about the SNAP application process?



Tips & Tools

If you plan to hand out multiple materials at your event, consider distributing them in a bag. The bag could contain a toll-free number, Web site, or logo. This bag makes it easier for attendees to carry information and ensures that all materials are provided to each customer.

Event Participation

- How many people came up to you to express an interest in your program or talked about the impact and benefits it had in their lives?
- If you used computers to prescreen people, how many were prescreened?
- How many prescreened people scheduled interviews at the local SNAP office?.
- If the event involved a cooking demonstration, how many people filled out positive evaluation cards on the taste of the food?
- How many recipe cards were distributed at the cooking demonstration?

Materials Distribution

If one of your objectives was to distribute SNAP information, record the number of materials brought to the event and how many were distributed. It's much easier to track if you combine materials in a giveaway bag and track those numbers.

Media Attendance and Coverage

- Did targeted reporters attend?
- Did reporters interview your program's leadership or potential customers?
- How extensive was their coverage?
- Did reporters convey your key points and other important information about the program?

Reference the media evaluation methods discussed earlier in this chapter for more information.

Capturing Stories

- **Photos:** Capture the event's success and vitality. You can feature these photos in reports, presentations, or in other promotional material. If your photos show members of the public, ask those people to sign a release allowing you to use their picture.
- **Staff-attendee interaction:** Consider your team's interaction with attendees. What types of questions were asked and did staff adequately respond? Were people interested in key topics such as nutrition? Did they ask for more information regarding the SNAP application process? Was there adequate staff on hand to answer visitor questions?
- **Referrals:** If your event focused on educating people about eligibility and enrollment in SNAP, consider the reach of that message. Specifically, measure the number of referrals made to a local SNAP office.

When reporting on the outcome of the event – in addition to capturing the success of the event's activities – be sure to highlight results for event attendance, materials distribution, and media attendance if applicable. All these areas will help you paint a picture of the event's success.

A sample event evaluation form is available at the end of this chapter.

Section VI: Measuring Public Awareness

Why is it valuable to measure public awareness and perceptions about SNAP?

Community awareness levels and perceptions about SNAP influence the success of your outreach efforts. What your audience knows or doesn't know can affect whether they apply for benefits or make referrals to others who would benefit from the program.

If possible, evaluate perceptions and attitudes before and after a new outreach effort to determine where perceptions started (benchmark) and how they may have changed or progressed (tracking) as a result of your outreach activities. Consider incorporating some public awareness measurement into your outreach program. It's best to plan these efforts at the outset, before a media or outreach campaign. Use the results of perception measurement tools, such as surveys or focus groups, to help you shape media messages and other aspects of your outreach activities.

How do I measure public awareness about SNAP in my community?

Surveys and focus groups are effective ways to measure public awareness. They provide direct opportunities to find out about your target audience's knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions. You can consider various options, depending on cost and the type of evaluation you're interested in doing.

In choosing a measurement tool, first decide what you want to get out of the measurement. Are you interested in insights about an outreach program's impact or are you trying to gauge perception shifts among your target audience? Depending on the tool selected, you will get different depths of response.

Focus Groups

A focus group is a representative group of people brought together to discuss their opinions and impressions. Each group usually consists of 8 to 12 participants, and each meeting generally lasts up to 2 hours. Focus groups collect qualitative, anecdotal data. They're effectively used at the outset of a communications effort to establish program messages and to identify key messengers. However, because focus groups reach a small sample of participants, the results cannot be generalized and cannot be considered representative of an entire population. Because of this, focus groups don't tend to garner enough participation to quantify perception or attitude shifts.



Tips & Tools

Understanding Your Audience's Perceptions and Attitudes About SNAP

- Helps your organization develop outreach efforts that effectively reach and educate your audience.
- Helps your organization overcome misinformation and negative perceptions by being prepared to address those issues.
- Helps your organization identify best practices to reach your target audience as well as identify what new materials might be needed.
- Gauges the success of your outreach efforts and can help you identify areas that might need improvement.

If you're interested in arranging an informal focus group and are not required to obtain Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval, below are some key steps to follow:

1. **Draft focus group recruitment screener.** This is a list of questions you can ask potential focus group participants to ensure that the participants are members of your target audience and qualify for the group. The screener is used when calling to recruit participants.
2. **Draft focus group questions.** Because group interaction is key to the success of the discussion, the questions should be open-ended in nature, allowing for participants to offer up their own responses versus stating yes or no. To get a directional sense as to how the target audience feels, we also recommend incorporating short questionnaires. These are filled out individually and can be used as conversation starters.
3. **Secure a venue for the focus group.** The venue should have a room with a door that closes for privacy and a table that seats the number of participants comfortably.
4. **Select a moderator.** Choose someone who's very familiar with your program and the information you're seeking to obtain from the focus group. In addition, be sure to have a moderator who reflects, as closely as possible, the demographic of the focus group participants. For example, if you are speaking to an African-American audience, the moderator should also be African-American.
5. **Draft ads or other promotional items to assist with recruitment efforts.** This could be an ad you run in a community paper or a simple recruitment email you send to local partners or community organizations to help spread the word about the focus group sessions.
6. **Recruit participants.** Work with your local partners, community groups, or other organizations that reach your target audience to recruit participants. Each group should share something in common, for example, all participants in one group are eligible but not yet participating in SNAP while all the participants in another group are currently enrolled in SNAP. The goal should be to get a diverse sample of people who can share their different perspectives with you. Be sure to collect participants' phone numbers, and email and home addresses so that you can send directions prior to the session. You will need to address informed consent procedures and ethical issues. You should also place a reminder call 24 hours prior to the group date.
7. **Conduct the focus group.** If possible, have a video camera or tape recorder on hand to record the focus group. At the outset, it is important to assure participants that their participation is completely voluntary and confidential and that their names will never appear in any notes or reports.
8. **Gather focus group findings.** Focus group results can be compiled in either a Word or PowerPoint format. The structure of your analysis should follow the order of your discussion guide. Look for key themes that arise across your focus groups. Also, try to support your findings with verbatim comments from the focus groups (but do not attribute comments to any individual).



Tips & Tools

If you are using Federal dollars to collect information (focus groups/surveys) from nine or more people, you may be required to submit a Federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) clearance package. If you are required to complete an OMB package, determine who will prepare and submit it to FNS. Be sure to work closely with FNS while completing the paperwork. You must also plan for sufficient time to receive OMB approval, which can take 3 or more months.

If you have funds, consider working with an outside vendor to develop the OMB package (if required) and to conduct focus group sessions. Focus groups can require quite a bit of legwork.

In addition, investigate the need for an Institutional Review Board or IRB. An IRB is usually required when human participants are involved with a study and is intended to protect the rights and welfare of participants. To learn more, visit the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Institutional Review Board Guidebook (http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/archive/irb/irb_guidebook.htm).

Surveys

Surveys provide a comprehensive examination of the facts, data, or opinions around a particular topic. Surveys are good to use throughout a communications program to evaluate success. Before a program starts, surveys can be used to establish a baseline or benchmark measure of your target audiences' awareness, attitudes, and behaviors. Tracking surveys (conducted throughout and at the completion of the program) will illustrate how attitudes and behaviors are changing and may require you to make some changes to existing activities. Surveys provide quantitative data and, because a large sample size or group of people can be surveyed, surveys can be generalized and are considered representative of the target audience.

There are various types of surveys. Choose what best suits your program's interests, resources, and infrastructure. Regardless of the survey method you choose, it is important to note that survey questions tend to be more closed-ended in nature. Survey questions should relate to your outreach's key messages. For example, if messages focused on eligibility, then the questions should address eligibility.

- **Paper-and-Pencil Surveys** Paper surveys or questionnaires can be distributed in the waiting room of your office or that of a partner organization. Once you have collected all the surveys, you will need to enter them into data processing software (e.g., Excel) or you can work with a data processor to input and tabulate all the data.
- **Online Surveys** Online survey tools, like Survey Monkey and Zoomerang, enable you to create surveys based on templates of professionally designed surveys, distribute surveys, and tabulate and showcase results, in addition to other features. You can set up Web surveys on computers in your waiting room or at other key community sites (e.g., food banks or unemployment offices), or drive participants to a site to complete surveys at their convenience. If you have large database of email addresses, this tool can be very efficient from a time and cost standpoint. Another benefit of these tools is that, in most cases, the software tabulates the data for your organization and allows you to download the data into Excel to create charts and graphs.
- **Mail Surveys** If you choose this option, it's recommended that you provide a stamped, self-addressed return envelope. You will need to allow for more time to complete a mail survey.
- **Phone Surveys** Hire a vendor or have a staff member conduct a phone survey of your target audience. You may randomly select individuals to participate in your survey.



Tips & Tools

If you do not have an internal person or group trained to design and implement surveys or focus groups, you should explore an outside vendor with this expertise. This type and level of research does require a deep understanding of ethics, data and analysis, and statistics.

Section VII: Additional Resources

How do I find third party evaluators?

If you're interested in conducting a more formal evaluation, consider working with a third-party evaluator, such as a research company, public relations or advertising firm (they often have research arms). Third parties generally increase the credibility of evaluation as they're an unbiased, outside source. A quick online search will help you find local research companies or public relations and advertising firms. In order for evaluation to be most effective, tap these companies during your planning, before outreach is conducted, so they can establish a proper research design and methodology. Another good place to look for evaluation resources is the American Evaluation Association (AEA). The AEA provides an extensive list of firms and independent consultants who could assist in your evaluation process.

Note: Mention of brand or proprietary names does not constitute preferential treatment or endorsement by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Exhibit / Event Evaluation Form Template

To Be Completed by Event or Volunteer Lead

Person Completing Form and Date:

Title/Organization:

Phone Number:

Email Address:

Event Details

Event date, time, and location:

Type of event and brief description of key activities (include name of sponsoring organization, if not yours):

How was the event promoted?

Weather on event day (please note if event was inside/outside):

Event Attendance and Feedback

Estimated number of event attendees (i.e., number of people who registered or RSVP'd, number of materials handed out, number of tickets passed out at the entrance of the event):

Did the attendees reflect a diverse mix of people (i.e., African American, Hispanic, Caucasian, Asian, seniors) or was it skewed to a particular demographic? Was the event targeted at a specific demographic?

Estimated number of staff or volunteers working your event or booth:

Exhibit / Event Evaluation Form Template

Media Information

Did media attend the event? If yes, complete.

Identify media source	# of media interviews held by your organization	# of requests for future interviews	Other information

SNAP Information

Please complete appropriate items.

# of SNAP questions	# of SNAP materials distributed	# of prescreenings conducted	# of certification interviews held by local SNAP office	# of SNAP applications distributed	# of SNAP applications collected for local office	# of SNAP interviews scheduled at local office

Did staff/volunteers provide good customer service?
Were they informed, easily identifiable, and helpful?

What worked well at the event?

What needs improvement in the future?

Materials Distribution

Resource Title	Type of Material	Est. # Distributed	Language(s)
Grab bags/information packets			
Pencils with toll-free number			

Spanish Glossary

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Spanish-language glossary provides translations of terms frequently used in SNAP outreach. In addition, included are translations of key organizational names and terms used internally at FNS as they relate to all the nutrition assistance programs. This glossary is intended to encourage consistency and help outreach providers who are responsible for the development of new materials or the revision of existing materials. By using consistent Spanish-language terms and phrases in written materials, we can all work toward more effective resources for our Spanish-speaking clients.

SNAP in Spanish

It is the policy of the U.S. Department of Agriculture not to translate the SNAP acronym, or the title Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, into Spanish or any other language. They remain in English. A description of what the program does can be rendered into any other language.

English Acronym Use

Use of the English acronym is preferred in the Spanish translation, unless there is already a very well-known and recognized Spanish acronym (such as ONU for United Nations or OTAN for NATO). Although acronyms have been included in the Spanish column (followed by “por sus siglas en inglés”), the acronym should not be used in the translation unless it is used in the English version. The first mention of an acronym will always be followed by “por sus siglas en inglés.” Style is thus: “El Servicio de Comercialización Agrícola (AMS, por sus siglas en inglés)...las reglas del AMS....”

<i>English</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
A	
Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents	adultos sanos sin dependientes (ABAWD, por sus siglas en inglés)
address	dirección
administered at the Federal level by the Department of Agriculture	administrado a nivel federal por el Departamento de Agricultura
administering agency	agencia administrativa
Administration for Children and Families (ACF)	Administración para los Niños y las Familias (ACF, por sus siglas en inglés)
Administration on Aging (AoA)	Administración de Asuntos de Adultos Mayores (AoA, por sus siglas en inglés)
adult day care center	centro de cuidado diurno para adultos
advisory (press)	aviso (de prensa)
advocates	organizaciones promotoras, organizaciones defensoras
afterschool care program	programa de cuidado después de la escuela
Agency Director	Director de Agencia
Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)	Servicio de Comercialización Agrícola (AMS, por sus siglas en inglés)
Agricultural Research Service (ARS)	Servicio de Investigación Agrícola (ARS, por sus siglas en inglés)
agricultural surpluses	excedentes agrícolas
Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act of 1973	ley de protección de la agricultura y del consumidor de 1973
Alexandria	Alexandria
allocation	asignación
allotment	asignación
American	estadounidense
American Commodity Distribution Association (ACDA)	Asociación Estadounidense de Distribución de Comestibles Básicos (ACDA, por sus siglas en inglés)
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)	Servicio de Inspección de Salud Animal y Vegetal (APHIS, por sus siglas en inglés)
applicant	solicitante
application	solicitud
apply	solicitar
appropriated funds	fondos asignados

Regional Names of Foods

NOTE: The USDA Food and Nutrition Service prepared this glossary for its internal use in communicating with a wide variety of Hispanic audiences from different Spanish-speaking ethnic backgrounds. Other users may prefer to alter the approach expressed in the following paragraph by customizing vocabulary and usage to their specific audience.

Often a food, such as a fruit or vegetable, will have completely different names in different countries. Use the Mexican name first, followed by the next most common name in parentheses (for example, “cacahuete (maní)” and “durazno (melocotón).”

Appropriateness for Audiences in the United States

Translations included in this glossary are for use within the United States, unless otherwise noted. Please be aware that the reader will need to apply any instructions in the copy as it relates to this country. For example, if the text advises the reader to look for salt that is labeled “iodized salt,” it is not going to do him or her any good to look for “sal yodada” in the grocery store. This should be rendered with the Spanish translation first, followed by the English term in parentheses, viz. “sal yodada (‘iodized salt’).”

Other Glossaries

The translator may know of, or discover, other glossaries that can supply needed terms. For instance, the Social Security glossary at <http://www.ssa.gov/espanol/glossintro.html>. We would appreciate any others being called to our attention, especially in the case of a word or term that differs from our own translation but seems to be more common or useful.

A Living Document

A glossary is a living document and needs to change as terms, phrases, and names come and go. We recommend that users research the Spanish names of organizations to confirm their own preferred usage. We will be grateful for notification of any such changes, as well as for suggestions of additions to the glossary or other improvements. Please send an email with “Glossary Suggestion” as the subject to SNAPoutreach@fns.usda.gov.

	English	Spanish
A	appropriation	asignación
	approved areas	zonas autorizadas
	Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs)	Agencias Regionales de Adultos Mayores (AAAs, por sus siglas en inglés)
	assist	asistir
B	authorize	autorizar
	avail	servir
	average	promedio
	back to the top	regresar arriba
	behavior-focused	enfocado en la conducta
	best if used by	fecha óptima para consumo
	beyond	más allá de
C	billion	mil millones (10 ⁹)
	bonus commodities	comestibles básicos extra
	breakfast program	programa de desayunos
	briefing	sesión informativa
	caseload	casos acumulados, número de beneficiarios
	Census 2000 Supplementary Survey (C2SS)	Encuesta Complementaria al Censo 2000 (C2SS)
	Census Bureau	Oficina del Censo
	Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion	El Centro de Políticas y Promoción de la Nutrición (CNPP, por sus siglas en inglés)
	Centers for Disease Control	Centros para el Control y la Prevención de Enfermedades (CDC, por sus siglas en inglés)
	centralization of food orders	centralización de órdenes de alimentos
	checklist	lista de verificación
	Child and Adult Care Food Program	Programa de Alimentos para el Cuidado de Niños y Adultos (CACFP, por sus siglas en inglés)
	Child Care Food Program	Programa de Alimentos para el Cuidado de Niños
	child care centers	centros de cuidado infantil
	child nutrition	nutrición infantil
	Child Nutrition Commodity Support Program	Programa de Apoyo de Comestibles Básicos para la Nutrición Infantil

<i>English</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
C	
Child Nutrition Division	División de Nutrición Infantil
Child Nutrition Programs	Programas de Nutrición Infantil
City Health Inspectors	Inspectores de Salud Pública de la Ciudad, Sanidad
click here for a printer-friendly version	haga clic aquí para obtener la versión para imprimir
click here for more information	haga clic aquí para obtener más información
Schools/CN Commodity Support Program	Programa de Apoyo de Comestibles Básicos para Nutrición Infantil y Escolar
Code of Federal Regulations	Registro de Códigos Federales (CFR, por sus siglas en inglés)
commercial labels	etiquetas comerciales
commodities	comestibles básicos
commodity (noun)	comestible básico
Commodity Acceptability Progress (CAP) Report	Informe Estatal Acerca de la Acceptabilidad de Comestibles Básicos (CAP, por sus siglas en inglés)
Commodity Complaint Hotline	Línea Directa para Quejas sobre Comestibles Básicos
Commodity Fact Sheets	Hojas de Datos de Comestibles Básicos
commodity food	alimentos básicos
Commodity Food Network (CFN)	Red de Comestibles Básicos (CFN, por sus siglas en inglés)
Commodity Partner Agency	Agencia Asociada de Comestibles Básicos
Commodity Procurement Program	Programa de Obtención de Comestibles Básicos
Commodity Program Disaster Manual	Commodity Program Disaster Manual (Manual de Comestibles Básicos para el Programa de Situaciones de Desastre)
Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)	Programa Suplementario de Comestibles Básicos (CSFP, por sus siglas en inglés)
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI)	Mancomunidad de Islas Marianas del Norte (CNMI, por sus siglas en inglés)
community	comunidad
community action agencies	agencias de acción comunitarias
community organization	organización comunitaria

English	Spanish
C community worker	consejero(a)
congregate feeding	comidas en grupo
congregate nutrition services	servicios de nutrición en grupo
congregate setting	facilidad de alimentación en grupo (depends on context)
conservation	conservación
contact	contacto
Contact the USDA Food and Nutrition Service Public Information Staff	Contacte la Oficina de Información Pública del Servicio de Alimentos y Nutrición del USDA
cooperating organization	organización colaboradora
Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES)	Servicio Cooperativo Estatal de Investigaciones, Educación y Extensión de Usda
cost	costo
Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)	Ajuste de Costo de Vida (COLA, por sus siglas en inglés)
CSFP Elderly Food Package Review Team	Equipo de Revisión del Paquete de Alimentos para Adultos Mayores
D day care center	centro de cuidado diurno
Department of Agriculture	Departamento de Agricultura
Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service	Servicio de Alimentos y Nutrición del Departamento de Agricultura
Department of Defense (DOD)	Departamento de Defensa (DOD, por sus siglas en inglés)
Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)	Departamento de Salud y Servicios Humanos (DHHS, por sus siglas en inglés)
Department of Homeland Security (DHS)	Departamento de Seguridad Nacional (DHS, por sus siglas en inglés)
Department of Labor (DOL)	Departamento del Trabajo de EE.UU. (DOL, por sus siglas en inglés)
dependent care deduction	deducción por cuidado de personas dependientes
designated service areas	zonas de servicio designadas
determining eligibility for free and reduced-price meals	determinar la elegibilidad para comidas gratuitas y de precio reducido
Dietary Guidelines	Guías Alimentarias
Dietary Guidelines for Americans	Guías Alimentarias para los Estadounidenses

<i>English</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
D disability	incapacidad
disabled	incapacitado
disaster assistance	asistencia en situaciones de desastre
disaster assistance initiative	iniciativa de asistencia en situaciones de desastre
disaster feeding	alimentación durante desastres
disaster food stamp benefits	beneficios de cupones para alimentos en situaciones de desastre
disaster preparedness meetings	reuniones de preparación para situaciones de desastre
disaster response	respuesta en situaciones de desastre
District of Columbia	Distrito de Columbia
E Eat Smart, Play Hard.	Aliméntate Bien y Juega Fuerte
Economic Research Service (ERS)	Servicio de Investigación Económica (ERS, por sus siglas en inglés)
Education Department (ED)	Departamento de Educación (ED, por sus siglas en inglés)
educational program	programa educativo
elderly food package	paquete de alimentos para adultos mayores
elderly	adultos mayores
electronic benefit transfer	transferencia electrónica de beneficios
Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT)	Transferencia Electrónica de Beneficios (EBT, por sus siglas en inglés)
Electronic Commodity Ordering System (ECOS)	Sistema de Órdenes Electrónicas de Comestibles Básicos (ECOS, por sus siglas en inglés)
eligible	elegible
eligible recipient agency	agencia destinataria elegible
emergency feeding organization	organización proveedora de alimentos en situaciones de emergencia
The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)	el Programa de Asistencia de Alimentos de Emergencia (TEFAP, por sus siglas en inglés)
emergency management operations	operaciones de manejo de emergencias

	<i>English</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
E	emergency supplemental appropriations	asignaciones suplementarias de emergencia
	emerging	surgiendo, saliendo, sacando.
	end product	producto final
	End Product Data Schedule	Calendario de Producción de Alimentos Elaborados Usando Comestibles Básicos
	entitlement foods	alimentos de disponibilidad garantizada
	entitlement programs	programas de disponibilidad garantizada
	environmental	ambiental
	Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	Agencia de Protección Ambiental (EPA, por sus siglas en inglés)
F	fact sheet	hoja de datos
	Facts About USDA Commodities for Schools	Datos de los Comestibles Básicos del USDA para las Escuelas
	fair share	participación equitativa
	faith-based organizations	organizaciones religiosas
	Family Department	Departamento de Familia
	Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services (FFAS)	Los Servicios Agrícolas Domésticos y Exteriores
	Farm Bill	Ley Agrícola
	Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002	La Ley de la Seguridad Agrícola e Inversiones Rurales del 2002
	Farm Service Agency (FSA)	Agencia de Servicios Agrícolas (FSA, por sus siglas en inglés)
	farmer	agricultor, granjero
	Farmer's Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)	Programa Nutricional de WIC en Mercados Granjeros (FMNP, por sus siglas en inglés)
	farmland	tierras de cultivo
	Federal and State Government health agencies	agencias gubernamentales federales y estatales de salud
	Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)	Agencia Federal para el Manejo de Emergencias (FEMA, por sus siglas en inglés)
	Federal Emergency Response Plan	Plan Federal de Respuesta en Situaciones de Emergencia
	Federal Government	Gobierno federal
	Federal Poverty Income Guidelines	Guías Federales de Índice de Pobreza
	Federal Seed Act	Ley Federal de Semillas

<i>English</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
F Fight BAC!®	iCombata a BAC!®
first in, first out (FIFO)	primero en entrar, primero en salir (FIFO)
fiscal year	año fiscal
FNS Regional Office	Oficina regional de FNS
FNS Field Office	la oficina local del FNS (“Field Office”)
FOCUS - Food Ordering Customer Service	Órdenes de Alimentos - Servicio al Cliente (FOCUS, por sus siglas en inglés)
Food and Drug Administration (FDA)	Administración de Drogas y Alimentos de los Estados Unidos (FDA, por sus siglas en inglés)
Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)	Servicio de Alimentos y Nutrición (FNS, por sus siglas en inglés)
Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program (FANRP)	Programa de Asistencia de Alimentos e Investigación de Nutrición (FANRP, por sus siglas en inglés)
Food Assistance in Disaster Situations	Asistencia Alimenticia en Situaciones de Desastre
food bank	banco de alimentos
Food Distribution (FD) (as short name for Food Distribution Division, below)	División de Distribución de Alimentos
Food Distribution Division (FDD)	División de Distribución de Alimentos (FDD, por sus siglas en inglés)
Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)	Programa de Distribución de Alimentos en Reservas Indígenas FDPIR, por sus siglas en inglés)
food experts	expertos en alimentos
Food Guide Pyramid	Guía Pirámide de Alimentos
food guidance system	sistema de guía de alimentos
food groups	grupos de alimentos
food handling	manejo de alimentos
food insecurity	inseguridad alimenticia
food items	artículos de comida o de alimentos
Food Marketing Institute (FMI)	Food Marketing Institute (Instituto de Mercadeo de Alimentos, FMI por sus siglas en inglés)

<i>English</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
F Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services (FNCS)	Los Servicios de Alimentación, Nutrición, y del Consumidor (FNCS, por sus siglas en inglés)
Food, Nutrition, and Information Center (of the National Agricultural Library) (FNIC)	Centro de Información sobre Alimentos y Nutrición (de la Biblioteca Nacional de Agricultura) (FNIC, por sus siglas en inglés)
Food Ordering and Customer Service (FOCUS)	Órdenes de Alimentos - Servicio al Cliente (FOCUS, por sus siglas en inglés)
food package	paquete de alimentos
food program	programa alimenticio
Food Program Reporting System	Sistema de Informe de Programas Alimenticios
food safety	control de sanidad de alimentos
food security	seguridad alimenticia
Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)	Servicio de Inocuidad e Inspección de los Alimentos (FSIS, por sus siglas en inglés)
Food Safety Unit	Unidad de Inocuidad en los Alimentos
food service professionals	profesionales en el servicio de alimentos
Food Stamp Act of 1977	Ley de Cupones para Alimentos de 1977
food stamp benefits	beneficios de cupones para alimentos
food stamp electronic benefits transfer	transferencia electrónica de beneficios de cupones para alimentos
food stamp issuance	emisión de beneficios de cupones para alimentos
Food Stamp Program (FSP)	Programa de Cupones para Alimentos (FSP, por sus siglas en inglés)
Food Stamps Make America Stronger	Cupones para Alimentos: Nuestra Salud, Nuestra Fuerza
food vouchers	vales para alimentos
Foot-and-Mouth Disease vaccines	vacunas para la aftosa
For a list of foods available for FDPIR participants, click HERE	Oprima AQUÍ, para una lista de alimentos disponibles para los participantes del FDPIR
Foreign Agriculture Service	Servicio Exterior Agrario (FAS, por sus siglas en inglés)

English	Spanish
F Forest Service	El Servicio Forestal (FS, por sus siglas en inglés)
form	formulario
free and reduced-price meal	comida gratuita y de precio reducido
freestanding	independiente
Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program	Programa de Frutas y Verduras Frescas
Frequently Asked Questions	Preguntas frecuentes
fund/funds	financiar/fondos
Funding Work Group (FWG)	Grupo de Trabajo de Financiamiento (FWG)
G go	ir
govern	governar / reglamentar
government food safety information	información del gobierno sobre control de alimentos
Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA)	Administración de Inspección de Granos, Empacadoras y Corrales de Ganado (GIPSA, por sus siglas en inglés)
grant	asignación
grassland	praderas
ground	tierra, terreno, suelo
H Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HAACP)	Análisis de Riesgos y Puntos Críticos de Control (HAACP, por sus siglas en inglés)
health authorities	autoridades sanitarias
health inspector	inspector sanitario
Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)	Administración de Recursos y Servicios para la Salud (HRSA, por sus siglas en inglés)
HealthierUS Initiative	Iniciativa HealthierUS
“Healthy Eating in Indian Country”	“Alimentación Sana en Territorios Indígenas”
help	ayuda
home [referring to Web page]	inicio
home-delivered nutrition services	servicios de nutrición a domicilio
homeless shelter	refugios para personas desamparadas
host family	familia anfitriona
household	unidad familiar

	<i>English</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
H	Hunger Prevention Act of 1988	Ley de Prevención del Hambre de 1988
	immigration and naturalization papers	documentos de inmigración y naturalización
I	improve	mejorar
	improve the health of low-income pregnant and breastfeeding women	mejorar la salud de mujeres de bajos recursos embarazadas o que están amamantando
	include	incluir
	Income Eligibility Guidelines	Pautas de Elegibilidad Según los Ingresos
	income eligibility requirement	requisitos de elegibilidad según los ingresos
	Indian Tribal Organization (ITO)	Organización de Tribus Indígenas (ITO, por sus siglas en inglés)
	infants	bebés
	information	información
	Internal Revenue Service (IRS)	Servicio de Impuestos Internos (IRS, por sus siglas en inglés)
	International Services	Servicios Internacionales
L	issue	emitir
	item	artículo
	last modified	última actualización/modificación
	learn	aprender
	link	vínculo
	local education agencies	agencias educativas locales
	low-income families	Familias de bajos ingresos. Familias de bajos recursos económicos.
	low-income pregnant and breastfeeding women	mujeres de bajos recursos embarazadas o que están amamantando
	lunch	almuerzo
	mail	correo
M	manage	administrar
	management evaluations	evaluaciones administrativas
	Market Nutrition Program	Programa de Nutrición del Mercado
	Marketing and Regulatory Programs (MRP)	Programas Regulatorios y de Mercadeo
	Meals-on-Wheels	comidas a domicilio (Meals-on-Wheels)
	means test	comprobación de recursos

	<i>English</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
M	media advisory	aviso de prensa
	Medicaid	Medicaid (programa estatal de asistencia médica para personas de bajos recursos)
	medical expense deduction	deducción por gastos médicos
	memorandum of understanding	memorando de entendimiento
	migrant children	niños migrantes
N	National Agricultural Library (NAL)	Biblioteca Nacional de Agricultura (NAL, por sus siglas en inglés)
	National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)	Servicio Nacional de Estadística Agrícola (NASS, por sus siglas en inglés)
	National Cancer Institute (NCI)	Instituto Nacional del Cáncer (NCI, por sus siglas en inglés)
	National Food Distribution	Distribución Nacional de Alimentos
	National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI)	instituto nacional de la administración del servicio de alimentos (NFSMI, por sus siglas en inglés)
	National Institutes of Health (NIH)	Institutos Nacionales de la Salud (NIH, por sus siglas en inglés)
	National Policy Database	Base de Datos Nacional de Políticas
	National Processing Agreement	Acuerdo Nacional de Procesamiento
	National School Lunch Act	Ley Nacional de Almuerzos Escolares
	National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs	Programa Nacional de Almuerzos Escolares y Programa de Desayunos Escolares
	National School Lunch Program (NSLP)	Programa Nacional de Almuerzos Escolares (NSLP, por sus siglas en inglés)
	National Youth Sports Program	programa nacional de deportes para jóvenes (unless the organization provided you with this translation, do not use initial caps)
	Natural Resources and Environment	Recursos Naturales y el Medio Ambiente
	Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)	Servicio de Conservación de Recursos Naturales (NRCS, por sus siglas en inglés)
	Needy Family Program	Programa para Familias Necesitadas
	net income test	prueba de ingresos netos

English	Spanish
N New Mexico	Nuevo México
No Child Left Behind	“Que ningún niño se quede atrás”
non-ambulatory	no ambulatorio
nonfat dry milk	leche en polvo descremada
Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP)	Programa de Asistencia Nutricional (NAP, por sus siglas en inglés) [Food Stamp Program in Puerto Rico]
nutrition assistance block grants	asignaciones en bloque para asistencia nutricional
Nutrition Assistance Programs	Programas de Asistencia Nutricional
nutrition education grants	asignaciones para la educación en nutrición
Nutrition Education Program	Programa de Educación Nutricional
nutrition education strategies	estrategias para la educación en nutrición. estrategias de educación nutricional.
Nutrition Program for the Elderly (NPE)	Programa de Nutrición para Adultos Mayores (NPE, por sus siglas en inglés)
nutrition risk	riesgo nutricional
Nutrition Service Incentive Program (NSIP)	Programa de Incentivos para Servicios de Nutrición (NSIP, por sus siglas en inglés)
nutritionally balanced	nutritivamente balanceada
O Offer vs. Serve	Offer vs. Serve
Office of Analysis, Nutrition, and Evaluation (OANE)	Oficina de Análisis, Nutrición, y Evaluación
Office of Civil Rights	Oficina de los Derechos Civiles
Office of Communications	Departamento de Comunicaciones
Office of Research, Nutrition, and Analysis (ORNA)	Oficina de Evaluación, Nutrición, y Análisis (ORNA, por sus siglas en inglés)
older adults	adultos mayores
Older Americans Act of 2000 (OAA)	Ley para Adultos Mayores Estadounidenses del 2000
One-Stop Service Center	Centro de Servicios Integrados
outline	v. delinear; s. bosquejo
outreach worker	consejero(a)
outreach activities	actividades promocionales

	<i>English</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
P	pack date	fecha de envasado
	parent	padre/madre
	partner	v. socio, adj. asociado
	partners	organizaciones aliadas
	Partnership for Food Safety Education	Alianza para la Educación sobre la Seguridad de los Alimentos
	pay	pagar
	payment accuracy rate	tasa de pagos correctos
	peach	durazno, melocotón
	period	período
	Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act	Ley de Comestibles Básicos Agrícolas Perecederos
	Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1997 (PRWORA)	Ley de Responsabilidad Personal y Oportunidad Laboral de 1997 (PRWORA, por sus siglas en inglés)
	pilot project	proyecto piloto, guía, etc.
	Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ)	Servicio de Protección y Cuarentena Vegetal
	policy	política
	posters	afiches
	prescreening tool	formulario electrónico interactivo de preevaluación
	press advisory	aviso de prensa
	press release	comunicado de prensa
	printer-friendly	imprimible
	processing program	programa de procesamiento
	processor	procesador
	procurement process	proceso de compra
	Produce for Better Health Foundation	Do not translate this or any other trademarked organization name unless the organization can provide a preferred translation (you can provide an equivalent after the English name, maybe in quotes but not using initial caps; here the translator had suggested “la fundación de productos agrícolas para una mejor salud”).
	Program Description Fact Sheet	Hoja Informativa del Programa

	<i>English</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
P	public and private nonprofit schools that provide meals to students	escuelas públicas y privadas sin fines de lucro que suministran comida a los estudiantes
	public charge	carga pública
	Putting Healthy Food Within Reach	Alimentos Saludables a Su Alcance
R	rancher	ranchero
	Rapid Food Response System	Sistema de Respuesta Alimenticia Rápida
	rate [as in “error rate,” not “interest rate”]	tasa
	reach out	alcanzar / llegar
	recall	retiro
	recipient	destinatario, participante (depending on context - use destinatario(a) for an agency, organization, or office; participante for person receiving program benefits)
	recipient agency	agencia destinataria
	recipient agency agreement	acuerdo de agencia destinataria
	referral	recomendación
	regulation	reglamento
	reimbursable meal	comida reembolsable
	report	informe
	request	solicitud
	Research, Education, and Economics (REE)	Investigación, Educación, y Economía
	reside	residir
	retail	detallista (negociante) al por menor (establecimientos)
	return	volver
	“A River of Recipes: Native American Recipes Using Commodity Foods”	“Un Río de Recetas: Recetas Indígenas Usando Comestibles Básicos”
	Rural Development (RD)	Desarrollo Rural
S	safe food	alimentos seguros
	safe food handling	precauciones al preparar alimentos
	safe food preparation	Seguridad de Preparación de Alimentos. Precauciones al preparar (los) alimentos
	School Breakfast Program (SBP)	Programa de Desayunos Escolares (SBP, por sus siglas en inglés)

<i>English</i>	<i>Spanish</i>
S School Food Service	Servicio de Alimentos en las Escuelas
School Food Service Professionals	Profesionales de Servicio de Alimentos en las Escuelas
School Lunch Program	Programa de Almuerzos Escolares
School Nutrition Association (SNA)	Asociación de Nutrición Escolar (SNA, por sus siglas en inglés)
schools	escuelas
Schools and CNP Policy Memorandum Database	Base de Datos de Circulares de Política para Escuelas y Programas de Nutrición para Niños (CNP)
Secretary of Agriculture	Secretario(-ia) de Agricultura
self-inspection	autoinspección
self-inspection checklist	lista de verificación para/de autoinspección
sell-by date	fecha límite de venta
Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)	Programa Nutricional de Mercados Granjeros para Adultos Mayores (SFMNP, por sus siglas en inglés)
set the tone	establecer el estilo/la manera
shelter	refugio
shelters	centros o casas de refugio
shore up	reforzar
site	lugar
snack	merienda
snacks	meriendas
SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)	acronym is not translated — use SNAP (can say las siglas en inglés de Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)
social security	seguro social
Social Security Administration (SSA)	El Seguro Social (SSA, por sus siglas en inglés)
soup kitchens and food pantries	comedores de beneficencia y despensas (o bancos) de alimentos
Special Milk Program	Programa Especial de Leche
Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)	Programa Especial de Nutrición Suplementaria para Mujeres, Bebés y Niños (WIC, por sus siglas en inglés)
speech	discurso

English	Spanish
S	
sponsoring organization	organización patrocinadora
standard	estándar
standard form	formulario estándar
State	estado
State agencies	agencias estatales
State agencies on aging	agencias estatales de adultos mayores
State agreement	acuerdo estatal
State Distributing Agency	Agencia de Distribución Estatal
State distributing agency update home page	directorio actualizado de agencias estatales de distribución
State Master Agreement	Plantilla de Acuerdo Estatal
State Office of Emergency Services	Oficina Estatal de Servicios de Emergencia
State processing program	programa de procesamiento estatal
stewards (of land)	administradores
stocks	reservas
streamline	simplificar
suggest that you contact your State distributing agency	se sugiere que se ponga en contacto con el organismo distribuidor de su estado
Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)	Programa de Servicio de Alimentos de Verano (SFSP, por sus siglas en inglés)
supplemental assistance	ayuda suplementaria
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	The program name is not translated, nor is the acronym. Use in English.
Supplemental Security Income	Ingreso de Seguridad Suplementario
supporting (documents, materials)	(documentos, materiales) respaldatorios
surplus commodities	comestibles básicos en excedente
T	
talking points	temas de interés
target population	población de enfoque
Team Nutrition Training Programs	programas de entrenamiento del Equipo Nutrición
TEFAP is administered at the Federal level by the Department	TEFAP es administrado a nivel federal por el Departamento
temperature (e.g., 325 °F)	render as is, in Fahrenheit (not Celsius)

	English	Spanish
T	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	Asistencia Temporal a Familias Necesitadas (TANF, por sus siglas en inglés)
	Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program — also see “The Emergency Food Assistance Program” below (TEFAP before 1990)	[before 1990] Programa Temporal de Asistencia de Alimentos de Emergencia (TEFAP, por sus siglas en inglés)
	Territories and Possessions and areas under Its jurisdiction	Territorios, Posesiones y areas bajo su jurisdicción
	the Agency	La Agencia
	The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP 1990 forward)	el Programa de Asistencia de Alimentos de Emergencia [1990 forward does not say “temporary”]
	toll-free number	número gratuito/sin cargo
	toolkit	Estuche de materiales
	trade expansion	desarrollo comercial
	training initiatives	iniciativas de capacitación
	trans fats	grasas trans
	trillion	billón (1012)
U	U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)	Departamento de Agricultura de los Estados Unidos (USDA, por sus siglas en inglés); after first mention can also be shortened to “Departamento de Agricultura de EE.UU.”
	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)	Departamento de Salud y Servicios Humanos de los Estados Unidos
	U.S. Warehouse Act	Ley de Almacenamiento de Estados Unidos
	underserved	(personas/grupos) de baja participación / en desventaja
	undertake	emprender, encargarse de, comprometerse a, etc.
	unfetter (unfettered)	liberar (libre), desencadenar, etc...
	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	Departamento de Agricultura de los Estados Unidos (USDA, por sus siglas en inglés); after first mention can also be shortened to “Departamento de Agricultura de EE.UU.”
	USDA Agricultural Marketing Service	Servicio de Promoción Agrícola del USDA

	English	Spanish
U	USDA commodity hold and recall procedures	procedimientos de control y retiro de comestibles básicos del USDA
	USDA Food and Nutrition Service	Servicio de Alimentos y Nutrición del USDA
	USDA foods available	alimentos disponibles del USDA
	USDA Natural Disaster Assistance	Ayuda del USDA en Desastres Naturales
	use-by date	fecha de vencimiento
V	vegetables	verduras
	Virgin Islands	Islas Vírgenes
	voucher	vale
W	waiver	dispensación
	wasting diseases	enfermedades devastadoras
	Web site	página web
	welcome (SNAP Benefits)	For "SNAP benefits welcome" use "tarjeta SNAP bienvenida; for "stores that welcome SNAP benefits" use "tiendas que brindan los beneficios de SNAP"
	welfare	bienestar público o asistencia pública (depending on context)
	welfare department	departamento de asistencia pública
	welfare reform act	ley de reforma de asistencia pública
	wetlands	manglares
	WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program	Programa Nutricional en Mercados Granjeros para Mujeres, Bebés y Niños de WIC
	WIC Program	Programa WIC
	(WIC) Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children	Programa Especial de Nutrición Suplementaria para Mujeres, Bebés y Niños (WIC, por sus siglas en inglés)
	workforce	fuerza laboral
	working poor	personas de bajos recursos con empleo
#	70 °F	70 °F (no Celsius equivalent)

Resources

Informational SNAP Resources Translated into 36 Languages

Five basic SNAP documents have been translated into 36 languages and are easily downloadable for simple copying and distribution. An “I Speak” document is also available which allows a person to indicate to a caseworker or advocate what language he or she speaks so that accommodations can be made.

The following documents are available:

- **Questions and Answers About Getting and Using SNAP SNAP313**
A brochure that provides useful information about SNAP.
- **“Public Charge”**
A notice to reassure immigrants that receiving SNAP benefits will not make them public charges, so that it will not affect their immigration status.
- **“Immigrant Eligibility Questions and Answers”**
A series of facts for immigrants about SNAP eligibility, based on changes in the 2002 Farm Bill.
- **“Documents Needed to Apply for SNAP”**
A list (in English and the target language) of documents that may be needed to prove eligibility for SNAP benefits.
- **“Fact Sheet on Eligibility”**
Ten facts about SNAP for elderly (60 and older) and disabled persons.
- View and download at
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/translations.htm>

“10 Steps to Help You Fill Your Grocery Bag Through the SNAP Program”

This low-literacy flier outlines 10 steps to follow to apply for SNAP benefits. Also available in Spanish. View and download PDF version:

<http://foodstamp.ntis.gov/>

SNAP Application Envelope

Help potential recipients compile all of the necessary materials to apply for benefits with this handy envelope featuring a checklist of verification documents. Also available in Spanish.

Order copies online at <http://foodstamp.ntis.gov/>.

Document number SNAP-02 (comes with SNAP-01, “10 Steps to Help You Fill Your Grocery Bag Through the Food Stamp Program.”)

SNAP Photo Library

Groups are encouraged to download photographs for use in communicating SNAP nutrition education and outreach messages. FNS requests that these pictures be used only for promotion, information, and education purposes of a nonprofit nature.

Download at www.grande.nal.usda.gov/foodstamp_album.php.

Order print-quality files by contacting FNS directly.

“Community Hunger Champions—Helping People Eat Right When Money’s Tight” Video

This eight-minute video introduces influencers at the regional, State and local levels to the SNAP Media Campaign, familiarizes viewers with campaign messages, and showcases the important role eligibility workers play in ensuring eligible individuals obtain SNAP benefits. This video is a companion piece to the toolkit and will help eligibility workers and community partners understand how they can work together and utilize the outreach materials developed by FNS.

[Download video](#)

SNAP Logo Guidelines

The SNAP logo may be applied to program materials used for identification, public notification and awareness, nutrition education, and outreach. The SNAP logo may be used by those administering SNAP, including the 53 State SNAP agencies and their counterparts at the local and county levels, for purposes consistent with SNAP statutes, regulations, and policies. Other organizations, such as nonprofit organizations and authorized SNAP retailers engaged in SNAP outreach or nutrition education, may use the SNAP logo for noncommercial educational and outreach purposes when such uses are a public service and contribute to public information and education concerning SNAP. FNS has developed guidelines for using the SNAP logo.

Download logo guidelines at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/roll-out/logo.pdf>

ENGLISH



SPANISH



General SNAP Outreach Resources

General Information

Main SNAP Web page

A starting point for general information about SNAP.

www.fns.usda.gov/snap/

History of the SNAP Program

Provides a brief history of SNAP from 1939 to the present.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/rules/Legislation/about.htm>

Legislation, Rules, Waivers, and Certification Policy

Includes a waiver database showing which States have received waivers of sections of SNAP rules for specific purposes or to accommodate local conditions.

http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/government/legislation_rules_cert.htm

USDA Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

Background information about USDA's initiatives for faith-based and community organizations.

www.usda.gov/fbci

Research Studies

Office of Research and Analysis (ORA)

Regularly released research studies that might prove useful in your outreach efforts. For the latest research and studies issued by the Food and Nutrition Service visit:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora>

SNAP Communication Tools

Main SNAP Outreach Web page

A starting point for information about SNAP outreach including information about developing and submitting an optional State SNAP outreach plan for FNS approval; the SNAP outreach coalition; and promising outreach practices.

www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/default.htm

SNAP Radio PSAs

A compilation of USDA's SNAP radio public service announcements.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/radio/default.htm>

SNAP TV PSAs

Two 30-second video public service announcements (PSAs) in English and Spanish. They are suitable for both TV and in-store broadcast and can also be used in meetings and presentations.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/psas.htm>

Radio Novelas

A compilation of 10 two-minute Spanish public service announcements in the form of radio novelas or miniseries.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/radio/default.htm>

SNAP Newsletter Article

A prewritten newsletter article to use in informing your clients of the new SNAP name.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/roll-out/newsletter-article.pdf>

SNAP Newsletter Paragraph

A prewritten newsletter paragraph to use in informing your clients of the new SNAP name.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/roll-out/newsletter-paragraph.pdf>

General SNAP Outreach Resources

Other SNAP Outreach Resources

SNAP State Policy Guidance

FNS provides guidance on implementing program policy to State SNAP agencies through memos to its seven regional offices.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/guidance/stateplan.htm>

The regional offices distribute the guidance to the State agencies with which they work.

http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/government/certification_policy.htm

SNAP Outreach Coalition Information

A core group of national antihunger advocacy groups, and other groups interested in promoting the health and nutrition benefits of SNAP. These organizations work to end hunger and improve nutrition at the national level through both advocacy and outreach to local antihunger projects.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/default.htm>

USDA Grant Information

Information about past and future research grants given by USDA to nonprofit organizations and others to improve access to SNAP by low-income persons and families.

www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/grants.htm

Hunger Champions Information and Applications

Established to honor local offices that provide exemplary service in assisting eligible clients to obtain SNAP benefits.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/default.htm>

Broad-based Categorical Eligibility

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/rules/Memo/2010/121809.pdf>

Prescreening and Application Assistance

FNS Prescreening Tool (Step 1)

This simple, low-literacy online prescreening tool enables users to input their information privately and, based on their information, tells them if they might be eligible for SNAP benefits and how much they might receive.

<http://www.snap-step1.usda.gov/fns/>

Links to Downloadable SNAP

Applications and Local Office Locators

Features a United States map. Click on a State to find links to that State's downloadable SNAP application, links to local office locators, and list of outreach providers.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/map.htm>

Combined Application Project (CAP)

As part of FNS' priority to improve access to SNAP, the agency is working in collaboration with regional offices, States and the Social Security Administration (SSA) to increase access to the nutrition benefits offered by SNAP for elderly and disabled populations receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI). The Combined Application Project (CAP) demonstrations make it much easier for the elderly and disabled SSI recipients to receive SNAP benefits by reengineering the SNAP application process and eliminating the need for this population to visit the local SNAP office.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/government/program-improvement.htm>

Research, Data, and Statistics

SNAP Participation Data

Features data and studies about participation in SNAP and the characteristics of households receiving SNAP benefits. Also includes evaluation reports for past FNS outreach grant programs from 1993-1994 (see “Food Stamp Client Enrollment Assistance Demonstration Projects: Final Evaluation Report, July 1999”) and 2001 (see “Research Grants to Improve SNAP Access Through Partnerships and Technology: 2001 Program Evaluation Summary – September 2004”).
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/oane/MENU/Published/SNAP/participation.htm>

Economic Impact of SNAP Benefits

Links to studies about the economic benefits of SNAP. The research was conducted by USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS), which is USDA's main source of economic information.
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/business-case.htm>

Impact of Food Assistance on Nutrition and Health

A comprehensive review that compiles and synthesizes published research about the impact of domestic food assistance programs on participants' nutrition and health outcomes. There are several volumes to the report.
www.ers.usda.gov/publications/fanrr19%2D3?

United States Census Bureau

Vast amounts of data on income and poverty levels, including data by county and State.
www.census.gov

Nutrition Education

SNAP Nutrition Connection

Features resources related to SNAP nutrition education including lists of State and local SNAP nutrition education cooperators (“State Gates”).
http://snap.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index.php?tax_level=1&info_center=15

Eat Smart. Play Hard.™

FNS campaign to motivate children to be active and eat healthy. Features fun activities for kids and information for caregivers. Free materials available.
<http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/eatsmartmaterials.html>

Nutrition Education Resources

Links to national SNAP nutrition education resources including guidance for developing an optional State nutrition education plan and submitting it for FNS approval.
<http://snap.nal.usda.gov/>

Success And Challenges In Delivering Nutrition Education To Low Income Older Adults

A PowerPoint presentation advising outreach providers on how to effectively educate low-literacy older adults about good nutrition.
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/menu/NNEC/Files/Presentations/DeliveringNutEdOlderAdults.pdf>

Information for Retailers

General SNAP Information for Food Retailers

Main source of information about SNAP for food retailers including information about how to become an authorized retailer, frequently asked questions, and tips for food retailers about outreach.
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailers/merchants.htm>

Organizations Serving Older Adults

Please note that this is a sampling of organizations serving older Americans and not a complete list.

The Administration on Aging (AoA)

An agency in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is one of the nation's largest providers of home- and community-based care for older persons and their caregivers. This network, serving about 7 million older persons and their caregivers, consists of 56 State Units on Aging; 655 Area Agencies on Aging; 233 Tribal and Native organizations; two organizations that serve Native Hawaiians; 29,000 service providers; and thousands of volunteers. These organizations provide assistance and services to older individuals and their families in urban, suburban, and rural areas throughout the United States.

www.aoa.gov

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS)

The CMS is a federal agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. CMS runs the Medicare and Medicaid programs - two national health care programs that benefit about 75 million Americans.

<http://www.cms.hhs.gov>

Leadership Council of Aging Organizations

A large coalition of the nation's nonprofit organizations serving older Americans. There is a 56 member association which is diverse and dedicated to preserving and strengthening the well-being of America's older population. This national organization advocates on behalf of seniors and their families in the ongoing national debate on aging policy.

www.lcao.org

Social Security Administration

The Social Security Administration (SSA) provides retirement and disability benefits to eligible Americans. Retirement benefits start at age 62 and are based on your average earnings during a lifetime of work under the Social Security system. SSA is responsible for two major programs that provide benefits based on disability: Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), which is based on prior work under Social Security, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Under SSI, payments are made on the basis of financial need. SSI disability benefits are payable to adults or children who are disabled or blind, have limited income and resources, meet the living arrangement requirements, and are otherwise eligible. SSDI benefits are payable to blind or disabled workers, widow(er)s, or adults disabled since childhood, who are otherwise eligible.

<http://www.ssa.gov>

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (N4A)

N4A is the umbrella organization for the 655 area agencies on aging (AAAs) and more than 230 Title VI Native American aging programs in the U.S. Through its presence in Washington, D.C., N4A advocates on behalf of the local aging agencies to ensure that needed resources and support services are available to older Americans.

www.n4a.org

AARP Foundation

Founded in 1958, AARP Foundation is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that helps people 50 and over improve the quality of their lives.

www.aarp.org

National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs (NANASP)

NANASP is a professional membership organization with members drawn primarily from persons working in or interested in the field of aging, community-based services, and nutrition and the elderly. Founded in the 1970s, NANASP is one of the leadership organizations in that it helps shape national policy, trains service providers, and advocates on behalf of older adults.
www.nanasp.org

National Council on Aging

A nonprofit service and advocacy organization. Brings together nonprofit organizations, businesses and government to develop creative solutions that improve the lives of all older adults.
www.ncoa.org

BenefitsCheckUp

Developed and maintained by The National Council on Aging (NCOA), *BenefitsCheckUp* is the nation's most comprehensive Web-based service to screen for benefits programs for seniors with limited income and resources. *BenefitsCheckUp* helps older adults find and enroll in federal, State, local and private programs that help pay for prescription drugs, utility bills, meals, health care and other needs.
www.benefitscheckup.org

Elder Care Locator

The Eldercare Locator is a public service of the U.S. Administration on Aging. The Eldercare Locator is the first step to finding resources for older adults in any U.S. community. Just one phone call or Web site visit instantly connects individuals to eldercare resources in their communities.
www.eldercare.gov

Community Transportation Association (CTA)

Transportation planning and coordination, supported with sufficient investment in transit alternatives, can help communities more effectively and efficiently meet the needs of their seniors and ensure their essential place in community life.
www.ctaa.org

Senior Corps, Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)

Senior Corps is a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service, an independent federal agency created to connect Americans of all ages and backgrounds with opportunities to give back to their communities and their nation. Senior Corps offers a network of programs that tap the rich experience, skills and talents of older citizens to meet community challenges. Among these programs is the Senior Companion Program which brings together volunteers age 55 and over with adults in their community who have difficulty with the simple tasks of day-to-day living. Companions help out on a personal level by assisting with shopping and light chores, interacting with doctors, or just making a friendly visit.
www.seniorcorps.gov

Additional Organizations

Meals on Wheels Association of America (MOWAA)

MOWAA represents those who provide congregate and home-delivered meals services to people in need.

Most members are executive directors, Registered or Licensed Dietitians, volunteer coordinators, or nutrition directors at Meals-On-Wheels and congregate programs.

Membership in MOWAA is diverse.

www.mowaa.org

Families USA

A national nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to the achievement of high-quality, affordable health care for all Americans.

www.familiesusa.org

SNAP Outreach Media Contacts

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Urban Justice Center, New York, NY

SNAP Outreach Coalition Members

USDA FNS Regional Offices

Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger, Burlington, VT

Watertown Tab, Watertown, MA



<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/>